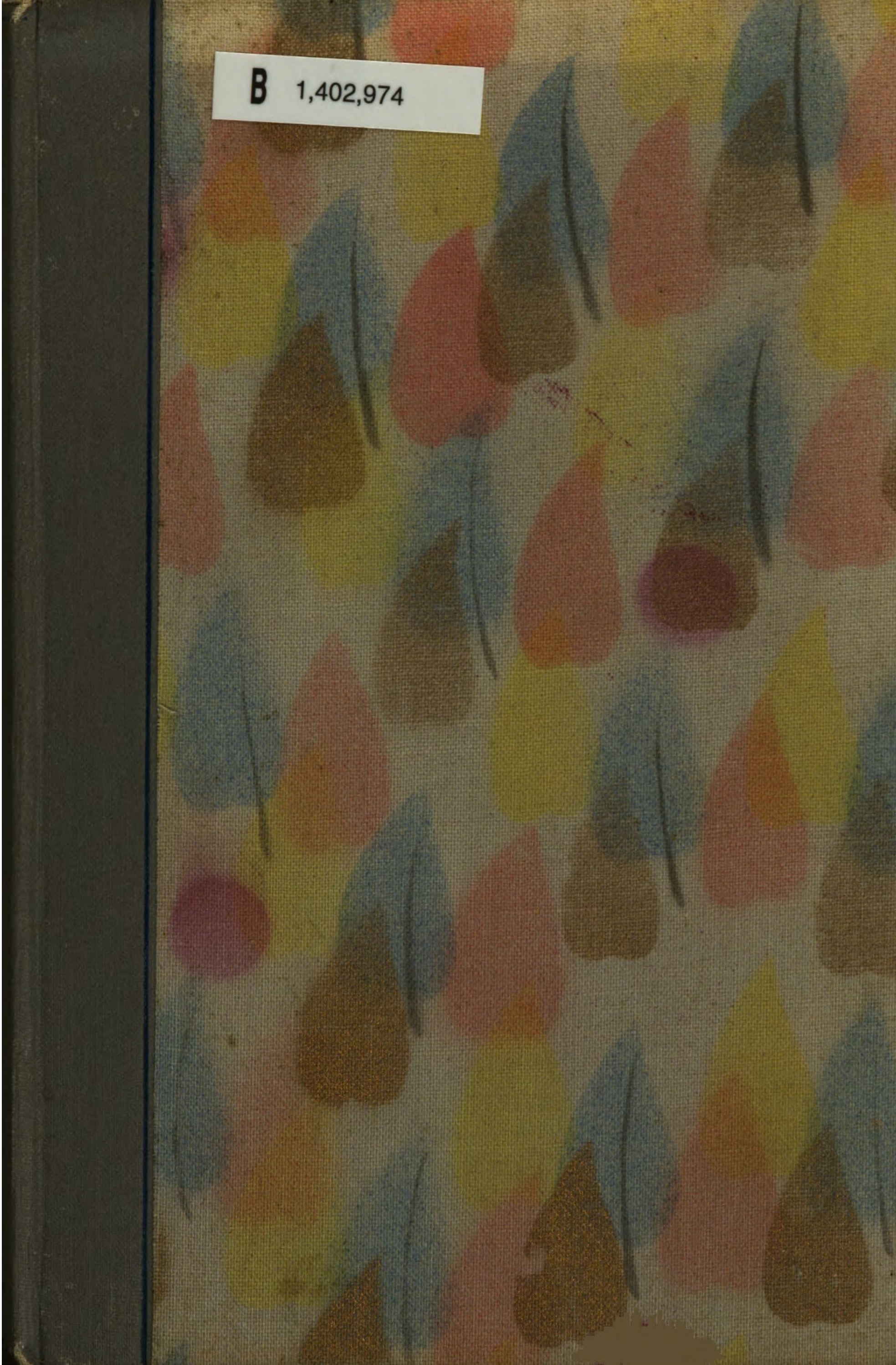

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THE
LIVING
BUDDHA

Books by
PAUL MORAND

GREEN SHOOTS
OPEN ALL NIGHT
CLOSED ALL NIGHT
LEWIS AND IRENE
EUROPE AT LOVE
EARTH GIRDLED

THE LIVING BUDDHA

BY

PAUL MORAND

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

ERIC SUTTON

LONDON
ALFRED A. KNOPF
MCMXXVII

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BOOK

I

THE FORBIDDEN CITY

BOOK ONE: I

THE automobile turned on to a causeway raised above the ricefields, edged with hordes of croaking frogs below it on each side: it was a high-sprung, heavy, old-fashioned car, truly royal. There was no one beside the chauffeur: at the back were sitting the Crown Prince and his Aide-de-Camp. The tyres scraped over the gravel, like a grindstone over corn, splashing through the puddles of the daily storm which the earth, in the appeasement of the night, had not yet managed to absorb. A damp odour that came through the windscreen, open at the level of the nose, foretold the forest: and they were soon beneath its leafy arches. The chauffeur began to drive with his right hand only: with his left he worked the head lights, flashing them on to fluttering bats, and scattering packs of wild dogs with their shaggy hair and metallic eyes. This lasted for ten minutes. Then the car slowed down and stopped: the searching rays were dimmed: it could be seen, for the first time, that the road went no further, and that they had reached the bank of a great river, full of stars. The forest disappeared into the swift stream, whose flat shining surface now filled the horizon. The moon was hidden, but its radiance was everywhere. The three men stayed where they were without speaking. It was cool no longer now the car had stopped: and the imprint of their backs, dry for an instant, began again to appear upon their white jackets. Someone lit a cigarette; the chauffeur killed some mosquitos; a rat splashed into the stream.

Nearly every day Prince Jāli drove at midnight to this place after dining with the King his father. At this point, especially in the rainy season, the river hurries down to sea. No embankments can contain it, nor any bridge span it. It uproots the houses on its lower reaches, and sweeps them in a huddled mass down stream. It flows under the pile villages, saps the soil beneath them, and bursts its banks in chocolate-coloured floods. Yet it is navigable, and fertilises from North to South the whole of that little Asiatic Kingdom which, like its neighbours, Cambodia, Siam, and Burma, is nothing more nor less than a strip of spongy mud, and reclaimed lagoons; and it brings down the Thibetan snows to the warm Indian seas. This fertilising stream possesses a ceremonial rank in the hierarchy of the kingdom, and bears the title of Duke.

After a few moments, the Prince got out of the car and, followed by his Aide-de-Camp, plunged boldly into the gigantic ferns under the overhanging boughs. He must have been familiar with the place, for, paying no attention to the irregular and sometimes hardly distinguishable line of the river bank, he took the raised path, built up with planks laid end to end. When they were about a hundred yards or so from their starting point, the two men stopped, and prostrated themselves three times: and so remained, as it were in prayer. The Prince got up first, and turning to his companion, reached out his hand for some bundles of dried herbs: and in the heavy darkness a tinder-box flashed out. Then, on looking upwards through a gap in the trees, could be seen a motionless presence, a bulk more lofty than the forest itself: it was the gigantic polished image of a Buddha, standing among the ruins of a temple of burnt brick, decayed and overgrown. The eyes of the statue had once been open, but the rains had so worn away their surface that now the figure seemed to be asleep. Time had closed its eyes as it closes the eyes of men.

The Prince returned to his car. In the clearing there was but one point of light and the smell of burning aromatic herbs.

'Renaud.'

'Yes, your Highness.'

'Don't forget that by this time to-morrow evening we shall be gone.'

'Very good, your Highness,' answered the chauffeur, correct and motionless, stiff in his seat, and without turning his head.

Silence fell once more. Surrounded by the intermittent sparks of glowworms, and the trumpeting of bullfrogs, the three men, bareheaded, without their sun helmets, seemed intent on collecting a supply of cool air before going to bed. But, in reality, they all knew that the moment was full of portent, and that one of them was this evening in possession of a secret, a secret so startling, setting the crown upon an edifice constructed with so much rapidity and daring, that the least movement seemed dangerous, the least word capable of bringing it down about their ears. The tropical night, so full of animation, with its sharp outlines and hidden depths, its sudden illuminations, and its populous silences, seemed swept into nothingness, by the effect of that curt order which the Prince had just given to his chauffeur.

This chauffeur,—he must be introduced at once, for, without being the principal character in this story, he had played a major part in it since he joined the Prince's service two months ago—was a young Frenchman of twenty-six. Sixth son of a Norman country gentleman, the Comte d'Écouen, who had been killed in the war as a volunteer at sixty years of age, he had been born five thousand miles away in an old Louis XIII manor house between the Vexin and the Caux country. Renaud d'Écouen had heard the noise of cannon but did not hear enough to be deafened by it like his elder brothers. He took no part in that great war which marks for some, the beginning of an age, and for others, the end of a world. Moreover, his professed indifference to that heroic struggle was quite sincere: it bored him as much as religious history, and irritated him like a drawn match. He himself had as yet done nothing, learnt nothing, but he felt that what was about to come was so astonishing that nothing that ever happened before would seem of the slightest importance. He arrived just in time to witness the interment of the gold currency, and its elder brother, the moral sense. Confronted with 1914, as Musset and Vigny were confronted with the battles of the Empire, he shared their pessimism, but not their admiration for what went before them. He was merely sure,—and by this time the French themselves are coming to realise it,—that all this slaughter had been in vain, that after eight years, nothing was left but the principles for which we fought, and they have become a little battered from having adorned our helmets for so long. His father had been killed at Verdun after having slain a number of German country squires—of all the people in the world most like himself. The tears came into Renaud's eyes as he thought of this tragedy. The 'righteous war' seemed something like a collision on a railway line. 'My poor father was killed in a dreadful accident,' he used to say. Renaud let the world go as it pleased: he had a well-ordered brain, served by excellent reflexes, a strong will, and a taste for action all the more creditable because, at bottom, he disbelieved in it. If these characteristics are, generally speaking, common among the youth of his age, Renaud had, as a distinguishing mark, a warm and romantic heart, though he did his utmost to get himself disliked and succeeded pretty well.

The widow of the Comte d'Écouen partially ruined herself for each one of her children: she prepared them as well as she could for their career as officers or officials, and, following a fine but blind tradition, she laid up for them a legacy of poverty. Eight hectares of timber were cut down, from 1922 to 1924, to enable the sixth son to prepare for his examination for the Colonial Inspectorate. He had been educated at the Lycée at Rouen, where he had done badly:

then, after finishing his military service, he had lived in Paris.

Renaud knew little of the vague torments of his idler or richer contemporaries. He was spared those monstrous dreams of power over which weak adolescents allow themselves to linger before they enter some lawyer's office. He was, and always remained, an inquisitive lad, with a clear and pitiless eye. Endowed with a realistic turn of mind which deserts even the best young men after their twentieth year, having measured at a glance the abyss that threatened those who gave way to their metaphysical anxieties, and played with the notion of death without daring to make any very close acquaintance with it, he took the sensible world for what it is worth. Everyone was saying, 'What's the use? We are beaten before we start.' Renaud left all this to go and live what seemed to him the best life, which meant a life lived at the highest possible speed: so he abandoned the others in a café, intent upon trying to define themselves, having soon realized that life itself will define and classify us all.

Being no doubt of the opinion that the road in front of him was wide enough to admit of a few excursions, Renaud took up various studies at the Sorbonne and the School of Oriental languages, and, as a result, found himself in a job with the Bugatti Automobile Company. Having started as a ‘ Camelot du Roi ’ at Rouen, in Paris he fell to frequenting the society of the Left, and ultimately the extreme Left. He spent his mornings at Levallois, astride a chassis, and his evenings in Montparnasse, in restaurants with paper table-cloths and aluminium cutlery, where the company was engaged in ‘ revising ’ moral values. Partly to astonish the Rotonde, he joined the Young Communists, and, about this time, changed his name d’Écouen, so deeply venerated by Saint Simon, into a ‘ nom de guerre ’ as round and polished as a bomb : Cohen. Wasn’t he quite right ? In the East, a convert begins by changing his name : Renaud had just been converted, if not to intelligence, at any rate to the intelligentsia. Coming as he did of a good family, it was easier for him than for most people, to descend in the social scale. Indeed, in these days, quite a number of young French adventurers are to be found outside France and especially outside Europe : and in the majority of cases they belong, like Renaud, to the provincial nobility. They are to be met with on ranches or in the cockpits of aeroplanes : sometimes they marry a fabulous heiress or, even better, a cinema star : sometimes too, they finish as smugglers or schoolmasters.

About this time Renaud, like a great many other people, turned his back on the West, and, without much reflection, transferred his affections to the East. His devotion was very violent. Wherever he could catch a glimpse of the Orient through his Occidental surroundings, he was hot upon its track. He discovered it in eighteenth century screens, in the Port of London, between the lines of the German pessimists, in the collections at Leyden or the Musée Guimet. Was it the influence of his studies at the School of Oriental languages, or of his ancestor Amaury d'Écouen, killed in the Crusades, or of his new name? While on a long period of military service in occupied Germany, Renaud had published a slim volume of poems called '*For External Application,*' every line of which showed the influence of Spengler and Keyserling and all those Germans who, while their house was on fire, escaped from the West by the back door, and whose books filled the stalls on German railway stations soon after the Armistice. For, in spite of his high spirits, Renaud read everything he could get hold of. He attacked authors he did not like with the extremity of fury, knife in hand, ready to cut their throats and drink their blood. When his poems came out, there appeared on the dust cover: 'Long live Germany, the India of Europe': the first two words were his, the rest came from Hugo, and not so bad either for a genius of 1848. Then Renaud came back to France. Paris, which he confronted with his clear eyes, clean hands, and slim figure, presented such a spectacle of moral yet sophisticated squalor, political folly, social perversity, degradation and barbarism, that he made up his mind to leave the West. At this period he wanted to make a fresh spiritual start, and was always saying so: he would constantly talk of 'free activity' as if every action were not as closely attached to a cause as a horse to a cart. He contemplated setting fire to the paternal house and destroying his identity, so as to become a real prodigal son, one of those who do not return to eat the fatted calf. But, though he gave a loose rein to his imagination, he was saved by his good training, and his fear of looking like a dandy out of the earlier novels of Barrès, with egotism in his buttonhole and bonbons filled with dynamite. As he had the English cast of countenance that is found sometimes in such perfection in Normandy, even among the farm hands, he had no trouble in borrowing some money in various bars, and he made up the necessary amount by appealing to one of his cousins on the other side of the Channel, Sir Patrick Écouen of Abbotsfield Hall, near Exeter, whom he had not seen since 1066, but with whom his family from time to time exchanged genealogical trees and baskets of game. He wrote him, in English, a lively and witty letter in which he said that the myth of Great Men had been destroyed: that of Important Persons would not last much longer: and the hour of Youth (in other words, his own) had struck. This generation no longer burns incense to its ancestors. In short, in any other period, Renaud would have been said to have turned out badly: but as the world had turned out badly too, we must be content to realise that he was merely following the tendencies of the age.

Renaud went via Moscow to Shanghai, and there in the summer of 1925 he founded a paper in the 'Young China' interest. He spent some time at Canton on two occasions, and visited Yunnan, Tonkin and Cambodia. The result was unexpected. His contempt for the West was now, in less than a year, combined with a hatred of the New East. He remembered the cafés and drawing rooms of Paris, and shrugged his shoulders at the recollection of his infatuation for the East. 'Madame, we have everything to learn from Asia. . . .' 'The Chinese, mademoiselle, knew that long ago. . . .' 'The Orientals, my dear fellow, see through us completely while we hardly begin to understand them. . . .' It was idiotic to be ashamed of not being yellow. Only Keyserling was capable of this, and he was subsisting intellectually on a journey he had made before the war: besides, Germans who prefer to announce that the West is perishing instead of admitting that they have not succeeded in marching through the Arc de Triomphe, are rightly suspect. The India of Kipling, the China of Claudel, have already joined the Persia of Montesquieu and the Grand Mogul of Marco Polo. What Renaud found in Asia was a number of reasons for detesting Europe less. As a matter of fact, if there was ever a moment when Asia was deeply in debt to Europe it was to-day. Renaud, who proclaimed this fact with much emphasis, found himself on very bad terms with the Chinese of the Kuomintang party, without however being removed from the Index by the French. At last, stripped of all his illusions as to the resources of a planet which had, according to him, become 'uninhabitable,' and having made his position quite impossible, he tasted the bitter pleasure of being rejected by all parties, and caught between two fires. Then, in an access of pride, he decided to give up using his secret printing press, except to publish a new poem—'pretty good stuff,' he called it—when his machines and apparatus were seized, and his paper *South China* confiscated by the Consuls of the International Concession.

Renaud was not easily dashed, and never averse from adventure, wherever it might come from: and, as will be seen, he found his reward. Disinclined to remain on European territory, weakened and ill from privations, tired of China —that land of the eternal negative, still ceremonious but no longer polite—image of the France that he had left—he embarked on a Danish cargo boat bound for a little State in Southern Asia: and there we now find him.

The Kingdom of Karastra is about the length of Italy, and forms a jungle so continuous that a monkey could traverse it from branch to branch without touching ground. There, on a foundation of totemism and fetichism that was always present, Buddha came to establish his rule. Far from destroying this little Arcadian settlement from the neighbouring lands of Polynesia, the Hindu doctrine has made it more attractive and adorned with its own philosophic calm the gentleness of a people content with little, credulous, devoted to music, disposed to pleasure, and, in a word, not far from the age of gold. A Royal Family, jealous of its traditions, has managed the country for two hundred years, as if it had been an entailed estate. Diplomatic rivalries, by neutralising conflicting ambitions, have hitherto averted colonisation and a protectorate; the administration, the tramways, the army, the navy, and the drainage system, regarded as necessary evils, were handed over to salaried Europeans. The inhabitants grow rice, and fish, leave trade to the Chinese, and never miss an opportunity of indulging in the most complicated ablutions, and crowning themselves with garlands of flowers.

All that Renaud had come to look for, and hitherto in vain, in Asia—the mysteries of the soul, the relaxation of the body in a bath of collective life, contacts with the Absolute, the serenity essential to a youthful mind too soon acquainted with the extreme of bitterness, lessons of wisdom and dignity, escape into the Middle Ages—he found, by an accident of fate, in the Kingdom of Karastra. He had left Paris in a tearing fury and he had never stopped to ask himself where exactly that East that everyone talked about might be. The cocoanut palms of Ceylon, the ironclads of Nagasaki, the mosques of Samarkand, the Luxor Palace Hotel, the Wall of Lamentation at Jerusalem, or the felt tents of the nomad Lords of Mongolia, were all these the one and only East? When he had gone about a great deal he understood that there, as everywhere, people confused all manner of things that had nothing in common, and the truth escaped them. He perceived that this problem of East versus West, which roused him so deeply, was not merely a question of latitude, but was also a problem of North versus South. To reach the Pacific Renaud had had to make his way across countries in which Germans were very like Russians, and others in which Russians were already Asiatics: he never came to a place where a new world began: which was because he had stayed nearly all the time in about the same latitude. But when his picaresque adventures drove him southward to the Equator, then he suddenly came upon what had hitherto escaped him. What the Trans-Siberian railway had not been able to make clear, a sea voyage from Marseilles to Java had first brought to light. Renaud had left the Mediterranean with its anthropomorphic Gods, traversed Egypt where the divinities with human bodies already have animals' heads, and came at last to those fantastic regions where all that is human has disappeared and where, behind wholly bestial idols, looms the Invisible.

Renaud was overjoyed. Under the auspices of Cook—him of the Agency—he had at last found, as he would say irreverently, the 'noble savage,' something not far removed from the 'Otaheitans' of old Bougainville, who as far back as 1750 was already accusing Europe of old age. Young Asia was not that agelong Northern China, which still conceals its taste for military dictatorship under caricatures of democracy: eternal Asia was not the welter of Southern China with its hordes of students home from the U.S.A.: it was this. Renaud had, without knowing it, taken a ticket for the beginning of the world. He became a child once more in the childhood of the Tropics that he had discovered at last. Horned scorpions, serpents with coils as complicated as a Chinese law suit, cobras swollen with wind, crawled out of the pages of books, and the windows of museums came alive. There were indeed the colonies, in Hédiard's sense of the word. There was the lotus on the face of the water, no longer figuring as a door handle or an ornament in a lady's hair. Renaud touched with his own hand rare woods that he had only seen used as inlays by the German craftsmen of the eighteenth century: orchids, and pearls that seem akin to them, the more beautiful for not encircling the necks of American women sitting round champagne-coolers: monkeys with faces like grave magistrates: and gold protected from prospectors by the good genius of malaria. After the parched land of China, he delighted in the water that lay everywhere beneath the surface of the earth, even in the capital itself, giving it a sort of resilience, as of an aquatic plant, characteristic of all cities built on such a foundation, here or in Asia, like Patembang or Pontianak in the Dutch Indies. The manners and customs of the inhabitants were fluid and tolerant like water itself: living as they did upon the river, with a boat of some kind as their only home, escaping any sort of census, this floating population made one feel that instead of a tiger the symbol of the country should be an otter. As he journeyed up stream in a canoe hollowed out of the trunk of a sago-palm, Renaud could see the natives, in their rudimentary habitations, nothing more than a roof of palm leaves and a floor of teak wood, moving about or squatting on their ankles, as in a primitive picture, in which the artist could find no other means of showing the interior than by leaving out the walls. He smiled at the lake-dwellings, so fragile that the law does not regard them as buildings, but as furniture, and the flowers so gigantic that they had to be felled like a tree: and round them grew the feathery cocoanut palms, mangroves, blue bamboo shoots, and heart-shaped betel trees. It was the time of year when the Chinese merchants, foreseeing a bad harvest, burnt their stores of rice, (insured at Lloyds): the river was lit up every night with magnificent conflagrations.

One evening after sundown, Renaud was walking in the outskirts of the Forbidden City, isolated within its lofty outer wall, crowned with battlements in the Indian manner and covered with patches ot green damp like vast droppings of vultures, when some Burmans standing by a doorway invited him to come in. They were stable-lads who, taking him for a tourist, hoped to get a few dollars out of him in exchange for a visit to the sacred elephants: six white pachyderms, with that dull, hostile, bewildered look common to all albinos, noisily munched sugar cane, swishing their tails over their dirty hindquarters, which looked like a pair of trousers on the point of coming down. At the far end of the stable Renaud found the coach house: he risked a glance and observed, swathed in tarpaulins, state carriages with twelve springs, automobiles for ceremonial occasions, and an electric char-a-banc in the Louis XV style, in which the king, once every year after the rains, visited his tributaries in the North. But what went to his heart was to see, standing in the centre of the marble court, the low, polished body, insolent with the menace of speed, of a brand new eight-cylinder Bugatti. Many despairing Malays who, like all the natives of that country, had, in spite of their pretensions, only the most superficial knowledge of the internal combustion engine and no taste for mechanical contrivances which they adopt but dislike, had made every effort to get it to move. When they failed, they fell to beating it as if it had been an obstinate donkey.

Renaud, on looking it over, was told that it was the favourite car of the Crown Prince Jāli, and that it had got out of order only a week after its delivery, the damp of the Tropics being apparently unsuited to it. The dark-skinned natives crowded round the white, immaculate creature. At every attempt to start her she groaned like a western virgin under torture: and the accumulators emptied themselves in despair. Renaud could not bear such brutality to a marvellous piece of mechanism. He took off his jacket . . . and for the first time, the Malays saw a white man at work, and one with fair hair, the type they most admired. They watched him open-mouthed.

When Renaud emerged from underneath the tonneau, a tall, thin young man wearing a linen dust coat was standing in front of the radiator. Who could it be? An Oriental sovereign is, on principle, invisible. Yet Renaud could not doubt that he was in the presence of a member of the Royal Family, for the servants bowed down to the ground, their heads between their knees, their hands clasped over heads and raised in supplication; and so they remained. The young man thanked Renaud in English, but with a cockney accent, without bending his head in its tightly-woven turban of linen or lowering his eyes behind their mica guard. All that could be seen of his face was an oval of polished bronze, a triangular nose broad at the base, heavy violet lips, and a pair of dim eyes over which the head-dress fell so low as to hide them almost entirely except for a gleaming line of enamel. When he said 'My car,' Renaud realised that this was the Crown Prince, and put his heels and his oil-stained hands together. His advice was asked, and given: the heavy Sumatra petrol must be mixed with ether to lighten it: and this was done. 'Now,' said he, 'I think the wheels will go round.' The car was a two-seater. Renaud sat down beside the Prince who turned on the petrol and the Bugatti leapt out of the yard, light as an opium-dream.

That same evening, Renaud entered Prince Jāli's service in the capacity of chief chauffeur. His statement that he had no connections in the country inspired all necessary confidence, and that credential was enough. He received a month's pay in advance, at dusk—for they reckon by nights in the Kingdom of Karastra—and he was paid, not in strings of shells, but in Singapore dollars. He agreed to live within the precincts of the Royal palace, which had various advantages and only one inconvenience, namely, of having his breath smelt at the principal entrance, as it is forbidden to enter the Palace after having drunk brandy.

At Karastra, the same word designates both pleasure and work. For Renaud they were indeed identical. His duties began at sunset. He did not go out before night, and only drove the Prince's private cars. His relations with the Prince soon became something quite other than those of servant and master. Jāli felt an unsatisfied curiosity about Europeans, having only had dealings with English governesses, broken-down exiles, unendurable Protestant missionaries, and diplomats whose manners disgusted him. Brought up in the traditions of his ancestors, in the heart of that anachronistic kingdom which seems suspended outside time, the last instance of absolute autocracy, being, indeed, almost a Buddhistic theocracy, Jāli had been married at sixteen, possessed two wives and several children, without having, on that account grown to manhood. His charm, the ardent grace of youth, which Renaud was by no means without, at once established between these two young men of the same generation (it is difficult to discover the exact age of an Oriental—but twenty-five was a fair guess for the Prince), one white and the other dark, a sympathetic understanding which was to have such singular consequences.

A real contact between the two races, so far apart from each other, is little short of a miracle: and this was one. A rare concatenation of circumstances brought together a European and an Asiatic—both young—in a new country, with no interests to serve, and untainted by any ulterior motives. Far from clashing like romantic antitheses, they were true sons of an age which, though it may complicate relations between different races, simplifies those between individuals, and they proceeded on a basis of equality and free intercourse. Each of them spontaneously renounced any advantage over the other, and refrained from using any superiority which nature had given him. Hampered at first by conflicting ways of thought, betrayed by words, —one of them accustomed to the indefinite, to symbols and to ritual, the other all precision, caution, hardness and analysis, it seemed only too likely that they would never meet. But one bond, absurd as it may seem, united them: a love of mechanics. This created a sort of professional comradeship between them, a material confidence that never exists between white and yellow men, except, perhaps, in smoking rooms. In Europe, it is time that brings about friendships. But, if the truth must be told, what can be more dreadful than an old friend? He is someone who betrays you at least as often as you betray yourself. What can be more delightful than a brand new friend? Every day Renaud had to describe the turns of the Montlhéry course, the tearing engines of the racing car, their deafening roar, the smell of lubricating oil, the working of the clutches, the hurricane starts, and tell the Prince about Divo's car, and Seagrave's single-seater: not forgetting the advantages of high compression.

A few months earlier Renaud would have displayed himself in his favourite pose, declamatory, cynical, and surly; to-day the easy life of the Tropics had made him more at ease, contented, and in better health: he had even lost that hunted look, characteristic of certain youths not long out of prison. His grey-blue eyes were bright, his hair no longer tarnished-looking but quite glossy. He had rediscovered that long-forgotten aristocratic desire to serve a Court, which, in old French families suddenly blossoms forth again in the presence of a Sovereign, however exotic he may be. Renaud replied to the caprice of Fate with a caprice of his own. If he had been engaged as a tutor, paid to adorn the Prince's mind, he would have resigned himself to the task, to earn his living, though much against his will. But the post of chauffeur filled him with enthusiasm. He plunged into his work with a readiness that no modesty could restrain, and no feelings of gratitude came to spoil. He became deeply interested in his Royal apprentice, in this naive mechanic who reminded him of the Sunday enthusiasts on the road to Versailles, and to whom he had so often to say: 'One can do anything, Sir, with a Bugatti. But there is one thing that your Royal Highness won't do very long, and that is to take your corners so fast.'

Some garages fulfil the function of drawing rooms. Hardly a night passed but Renaud and the Prince stayed up, taking the engine to pieces, discussing and proving all things, surrounded by the ideas and implements of the West. Jāli, who was extremely impressionable, would pour out a stream of those breathless, confused and childish questions, just as his ancestors, the Eastern Kings, are represented as doing in the course of those interminable catechisms that constitute the Hindu classics. When evening had fallen and it was cool enough to go out, they would stop the car by the road-side and sit conversing together in perfect simplicity. All this took place without witnesses and, what is rarer in Asia, without spies, except those posted by the police at cross roads on the pretext of controlling the traffic: they returned past the canals and the residence of the late King, accursed and abandoned when only half constructed because it had been struck by lightning: thence in front of the hospital of the Sisters of the Cross, to the Palace, passing through the ancient Portuguese fortifications.

Sometimes, at a speed of ninety miles an hour, with no windscreen, his hair kept in place by the elastic of his black goggles, his face hidden by the folds of the linen mask which gave him the most singular appearance of having a cast-iron nose, the Prince put on the brakes and stopped.

'Why are we going so fast,' he asked, 'since we aren't going anywhere?'

'To keep cool, and because our age is a general *sauve-qui-peut*, your Highness, and only the swiftest will escape.'

'My father says—and his words are jewels—that kings and nobles ought to set an example of wisdom and go slowly, that he who hurries loses face. His High Wisdom adds that to be in a hurry is degrading.'

'That is because you have been taught to seek what is good: we Europeans only learn what is likely to be profitable. Besides, wisdom of that kind is an invention of the East.'

'And yet how I love going fast,' exclaimed the Prince, stroking the driving wheel of the racing car, with its flexible framework edged with rubber.

'That shows that the East is no longer wise,' said Renaud laughing. 'Asiatic patience is done for. Speed will devour the whole earth as it has devoured the West. Not that I believe in Gandhi's spinning wheel, that ancient Pre-Raphaelite and Ruskinian prejudice. Machines are necessary slaves, but they ought to have been carefully watched. The principle is excellent since they mean a diminution of work: but it is abused, for machines are also used to produce more work. Inventors are a brutal race; let us cease to do them honour. Soon, nothing that does not move will be able to exist.'

'I should like to see all that for myself!'

'Take care, your Highness. That is a wish that has ruined many a strong man.'

'If I could only see it all! Live no longer in a country in which the trains do not arrive, and where the mailboats do not call: where everything is still made by hand: where the telegraph wires are torn down by storms: where the monkeys drink out of the porcelain insulators, and where the vultures put the wireless out of order by sitting on the aerials. One might think that nature forces us to go slowly.'

'Why not, my Lord? True luxury, in which no one now is cultivated enough to indulge, perhaps consists in taking one's time.'

'... If only I could see just once whether all that one reads in your papers, and sees on your films, where the world is born again daily, is really true. Giant houses like the nests of white ants, bridges suspended in the air, trains roaring above the flashing trams, and boats beneath the sea: all that marvellous strength of yours that seems best revealed under the form of speed: all manner of contests—men, horses, bicycles, aeroplanes: speed records; men who win by several hours, or lose by a few seconds: people who are electrocuted without having noticed it, and who commit crimes as rapidly as a flash of lightning, escape in motor cars and are never caught by the police.'

Renaud looked at the Prince curiously. He had never seen such a display of energy in a man of the Far East. Jāli must have been aware of his surprise. He became ashamed of his frankness and assumed a defensive attitude once more, on guard against any future confessions.

'Doubtless our Bonzes are right,' said he. 'It is idiotic to be in a hurry. We shall all reach death at the same time.'

'No, some of us will get there first, and success in the West is to get there as late as possible.'

'Tell me, Oh Spirit of Excellence," asked Jāli with interest; 'is life good in your world?'

'Very bad, my Lord. Yet everyone loves it.'

'Why?'

'Because we are rich in reasons for living. Envy is the first: an object has value in our eyes when it is owned by someone else. Envy drove the middle classes to attack the nobles in former days, and to-day drives the people against the middle classes: it drives the strong against the weak: it hurls the young against the old, women against men. We live in a world of constant collisions which perhaps explains all these lightning flashes. And what is true of the inhabitants of the West is true also of their countries. They too never lay down their arms. Some are destroyed and consumed, and others wounded. Others grow weary and stagnate. A few hours before, they had the appearance of health—gold in their banks, treaties of alliance, and invincible armies: behold them prostrate, shedding their life blood from wounds old and new. Their disordered mechanism continues to function; but since it produces nothing, such activity poisons the very vitals of the State, and the organism is congested with the waste matter it can no longer eliminate. Such countries, proud as they are, are not easily daunted by suffering, and are the last to suspect the passing of their power: but they are wrong. Think of England.'

' So states may fall ill, too ? ' said the Prince.

' Yes, and grow old as well. Their constitutions decay and their administrations suffer from arterio-sclerosis. There is no money to spend on remedies, and they labour under a senile craving for economy. They shun the open air and become addicted to the abuse of poisons: alcohol everywhere, but no milk. Then the reflexes cease to function properly, and there is a general *sauve-qui-peut* of the healthy organs at the expense of those diseased: then comes prostration, persecution-mania, and collapse. I've seen it all not long ago.'

' Where ? '

' In France, Sir, in my own country.'

' And after that ? '

' General paralysis and death. True, life is a disease of which the whole world is dying: but there you have death without repose, death which is a continuing agony, an end without hope in the future or in what is left behind, a choking shriek, a stifled curse, and then—

annihilation under the level and indifferent snow. Once I admired such things and longed to see them: but I have seen that awful sight, and I got out of Russia as man might flee from Hell.'

'You are very hard on Europe!'

'Oh, that is nothing to the blows dealt her by her own sons, from Rousseau to Tolstoy, long before Asia came into it.'

The Prince's eyes, so often expressionless, began to glow and revealed a sensibility far other than ours, like a language whose words are unknown but whose passionate intonations betray its meaning. Lit up from below by the lamp on the dashboard round which the mosquitoes were fluttering, his Oriental countenance was impassive and impenetrable: it could hardly have been modelled in the round, at any rate in the style of a good period. His indeterminate nose, straight ill-defined mouth, thin neck, and tall stature seemed to justify those claims to Chinese extraction of which the Royal Family was so proud. Only the dark complexion and lank dry thick hair, like that of a woman, revealed in Jāli a Polynesian strain, on his mother's side no doubt.

'Then evil is to be found everywhere in your country, O Essence of the Truth?' he asked Renaud, with that slightly sibilant accent which lent a quaint distinction to his speech.

'A disciple of Perfection does not need to be told, your Highness, that wherever there is desire there is also danger. Our relations with our fellows are like those that might exist between the characters on two films unrolled simultaneously, in opposite directions, and at tremendous speed. Our interests and social contacts have become immediate and inextricable; rest—I mean real rest, not that induced by bromide—exists no longer; the silence of retirement is broken by the telephone and the wireless; publicity comes to your fireside and plants its blows squarely in your face. We may be sated but we can never be satisfied, for the West cannot exist unless it is in need of something; we live but to desire.'

'Salt water increases thirst,' said the Prince.

'For many centuries the limit of human strength set a term to this passion, but our inventions have expanded it or destroyed it altogether. Why are we not like the Chinese who, having invented gunpowder, for two centuries used it only for fireworks? We have now come back to that speed of which you are so fond, Sir, and of which we were speaking just now. For all this is a vicious circle. This only is clear, that in speed there is something irresistible and forbidden, a tragic beauty, with incalculable consequences, a necessity and a curse. Everything leads to it, pleasure and boredom, wealth and poverty, and nothing comes of it but more grievous disappointments, more dreadful desires, all manner of disasters, abyss upon abyss. . . .'

The Prince listened impassively, but his lips trembled at the effort he made to follow Renaud's words, which were a little too quick for him, and he said, 'I must see all that for myself.'

In tropical countries, the period of adolescence lasts but an instant, and men's bodies pass without transition from childhood to maturity: and their minds likewise. It would be too little to say that Jāli's highly impressionable nature was awakened by his intercourse with Renaud: it positively took fire. A whole universe opened before his vision and Jāli, gradually ceasing to resist, unlike most Asiatics, anything that departs from their hereditary beliefs, observed it, with his newly stirred imagination, in all its terrible magnificence.

Jāli was not very intelligent. It was even an effort to him to concentrate his thoughts, if his sensibility was not touched: a characteristically Oriental inaptitude, if not for abstraction, at any rate for general ideas. But emotion opened the doors, and lit up what he could not otherwise have grasped. Not intelligent perhaps, but like most of his fellow Orientals, ten times more acute than an average man of the West. In common with many young Asiatics of to-day, a natural foundation of indecision and indolence began to be displaced by quickness and flexibility of mind. Lastly, in Jāli's case, a natural generosity, complete absence of vanity, rather uncommon virtues in a little local potentate, simplified many things while complicating others—notably his relations with the King his father.

The King, by name Indra, looked like an ibis stuffed with serpents: no means old as yet, he was egotistical, violent and diabetic. One of the last absolute monarchs in Asia—his colleagues of Afghanistan, Siam and Nepal being the only other survivors, he governed in the Oriental manner, calling a succession of favourites to power, and believing that foreign politics consisted in playing off foreign Powers against each other. He spent enormous sums of money—a third of the taxes of the State—and his entire private fortune, which was considerable, owing to the large revenues from the rice-plantations, on his personal needs and pleasures, and on building uninhabitable palaces; he was profoundly conversant with problems of royal etiquette, spent much time in court ceremonial, surrounded himself with actors, and himself took part in their performances with much satisfaction, in spite of his swollen legs. He had an utter contempt for modern ideas and the progress of civilisation, and would only tolerate a minimum of either, and on the express condition that that minimum should contribute to his amusement and the astonishment of his subjects. All his life he refused to set foot in Europe and returned from a brief voyage in Indo-China full of animosity and amazement. He prohibited lifts, and when he was travelling by train he was afraid the tunnels were going to fall on his head. Not unlike a King of cards, he had two faces and did not shrink from methods of terrorism: the revolutionary movements fomented in Karastra by Chinese secret societies were drowned in blood.

King Indra loved Jāli, for he was the son of his chief queen and not of a concubine. He made him a lavish allowance, for he was very anxious that the young Prince should never feel any doubt of his position, the fidelity of his retainers, the love of his subjects, the servility of his white officials, the blessings of the age and the insignificance of the world that extended outside the walls of the Forbidden City. Jāli had three palaces, and was thus provided with accommodation in the town and in the country, and for the dry and rainy seasons. One was of cedar, the second of marble and the third of baked bricks with roofs of blue tiles. There he grew up surrounded by lotus ponds, luxury, women, and idleness. The luxury was Asiatic, that is to say of no great significance compared with the luxury of the West. It consisted in children, legitimate and otherwise, dancing girls, tame animals presented by his high officials, gramophones, fruit, syrups, cakes, and cigars rolled in the petals of flowers, visits to astrologers priests and temples, games, and expeditions in motor boats. Jāli took little part in the female life and interior politics of the Palace, which, in the year 1926, were still strangely like the Khmer intrigues of the tenth century. King Indra had had his son taught the principal European languages, being convinced that they were used by different social castes: French, in order to be able to communicate with educated people; German, to make himself understood by commercial travellers, and English, because it was the official language of the Kingdom, and also to help him to borrow from banks, play tennis and send telegrams. Jāli spoke all these fluently, but the foundation of his speech was still Oriental, adorned with metaphors, sinuous with symbols, and loaded with compliments. He wrote a good handwriting, which is a sign of race; his women used to like to stand round him while he traced the letters. His Chinese masters who had been his earliest teachers filled him full of the classics, and, in accordance with the tradition, appealed to his memory alone. Then came the Belgian Fathers, who had crammed Jāli with Western ideas, confused and contradictory, a medley of scientific marvels and outworn incantations, which added to his astonishment and his uneasiness of mind. He had some German atlases, but found it difficult to understand the shape of the earth. He said, as the Fathers had taught him, that it was round, but he was not at all shocked to hear the Bonzes assert that it was the shape of a shoulder of mutton and that Karastra was the centre of it. He had some knowledge of chemistry, as of magic, and of medicine, as of spells and charms. These contrasts are not infrequently to be met with in Asia. The same learned men who calculate the passage of an eclipse to the tenth of a second are quite prepared to rattle a drum when the eclipse appears, so as to prevent the moon eating the sun. Moreover, Jāli had passed the obligatory period in a monastery; he was well acquainted with the laws and the words of the Buddha, and practised the religion in accordance with the custom of the Kingdom, that is to say with ceremonial indifference, contenting himself with giving alms to the poor, observing the festivals, and building here and there a few monuments for sacred relics.

Like the rest of the inhabitants of Karastra, Jāli loved music and songs: and he was by no means indifferent to the pleasures of the senses. He had some Chinese women who knew a thousand poems by heart, and some women of Pegu, whose elaborate endearments are much in request during the great heats; and even European women brought from Singapore. He had, like a true Oriental, violent desires, and satisfactions so shattering that his passion died almost as soon as it was born.

Though it was not apparent, the Prince acquired a great deal of knowledge, especially after his instruction had come to an end. He gave up dreaming and began to reflect. Europe excited his imagination: what had she to teach? If it sometimes happens that certain rare Occidentals question the East to discover a better way of life, it may be said that every young Oriental turns to Europe and America as towards Gods who have answers for everything. In the secret chambers of the Palace, conversation, example, books, and even more intangible intermediaries brought to bear on the Crown Prince influences quite contrary to the vocation that had been laid down for him. In this regard Renaud's arrival was decisive.

This correct, efficient, and well-mannered chauffeur did not attract the attention of the Court. Neither the Political Police, nor the Eunuchs, nor the Astrologers had anything to complain of. He rescued a certain number of cars from the hands of the Malays: he even fitted hollow rims and pneumatic tyres to the ceremonial mortuary coaches. He had access to the Prince at all times, and it has been seen how the latter had been drawn to seeking his company every day.

That evening at midnight Renaud came for his orders. He left the King's Palace, modelled on St. Peter's at Rome, and made his way towards the Prince's pavilion: he passed between the guards in their red uniforms, mounted the steps, and entered the vestibule. These tropical dwellings are quite without mystery. Behind an Italian facade—the entire Royal city was the work of two generations of Neapolitan architects—stood the age-long native house, lighted from above, partitioned by straw matting, with a gallery of carved wood running round all four sides, ornamented with ferns in Canton jars. The only difference was that instead of a teak floor and a ladder of plaited creeper, the pavement was of onyx and the stairway of marble imported from Carrara. The rooms without windows, doorways with no doors, bore witness to the simplicity of a life never threatened from without: through the archway one could see the sharp outlines of the leaves of the banana trees, curved and twisted like Eastern sword-blades and smeared with electric blue.

On the walls hung portraits of the Royal Princesses in frames painted with the national colours, and an enlarged photograph of the King, retouched by hand, with red gouache on the cheeks. Above a couch hung the representation of a tiger, embroidered in silk, with two flags in its mouth.

In the stifling Asiatic night, Renaud thought of his mother alone in the old house at Écouen this autumn, its bricks grown green with age, battered by the howling winds, and its tall rooms, sometimes suffocating with heat and sometimes icy-cold, where one's eyes smarted from the smoke blown down the chimney, and the draughts bellied the curtains out from the windows.

The Prince had stayed late with the King. A servant in a pale blue loin cloth and white jacket, with feet and legs bare, brought in the betel-nut.

Another brought some of those peeled tropical fruits, taken to pieces like clock-work and put together without pips, kernels or rinds, and smelling of terebinth. Ladies in waiting made a vague and somewhat transient appearance. The Queens, though not in strict seclusion, were not often seen. Sickly, childish and of feeble intelligence, they played no part in the life of the Palace, except perhaps during the few nights when they were the objects of desire. Renaud pondered over the economy of this royal residence which indeed scarcely differed from that of a rich bourgeois of Southern France. As he had already noticed in the case of Chinese billionnaires, in the Far East wealth does not swamp the individual, for it never expresses itself in passion or display; here, for instance, the number and quality of the gold implements for serving the betel-nut were hardly indicative of so exalted a household. In this land of frugality and social equality the life of a Prince of Karastra was almost the same as that of the fisherman crouched at the bottom of his junk. Renaud asked himself whether all this was matter for admiration or amusement; and he smiled as he thought of the old theme for admission to the Academy of Dijon: 'Whether the progress of the sciences and arts has tended to the corruption or the purification of morals.' This question, which had been asked for nearly two hundred years, had not been answered; and behind it lay the whole antithesis of East and West which he found here also. . . . 'The fact is,' he said to himself, 'the noble savage has no real existence. Primitive peoples misbehave themselves in other ways than civilized ones, but that is all.'

At last he caught the harsh gutturals of the language of the country. The Prince came in and signed to Renaud to follow him. Jāli was elaborately dressed in the Chinese manner, in a long robe of white silk and boots of black satin. Renaud had begun to be able to interpret these mask-like faces, and know how to overcome the apparent triumph of immobility. He saw in the Prince's eyes an unexpressed emotion; the yellow features kept their secret close. He knew that, especially since his arrival, there had been grave differences between the Prince and the King. But what had they been? He had ventured to ask Jāli if his father had come into collision with him on any point, but the Prince had answered: 'His Majesty is a Pearl of Kindness towards me,' adding: 'all the trouble comes from that.'

Jāli spoke of the King, even in French or in English, with that deference which is conveyed in the speech of Karastra by certain words and certain verbs which are only used to designate the person of the Sovereign, the Buddha or the sacred elephants, to describe their acts or the more honourable parts of their bodies.

Renaud waited, standing ; the Prince made him sit down, stretched himself on the floor and chewed betel-nut, then said abruptly :

'I want to go, I must go.'

This necessity had fallen upon him with the violence of an epileptic seizure. Renaud could not help thinking of the Europeans he had known who had had men of the yellow races in their service. They all said : 'We felt quite sure of them, and they themselves seemed friendly and contented, and then, one day, without the slightest warning, they disappeared.'

'Nothing can keep me here,' Jāli went on. 'My father has guessed it.'

'Is not your Highness entirely free to travel ? '

'In the interior of the kingdom, yes. But even to visit the tributary States, and more especially to go any further, the consent of the Crown Council is necessary . . . the King knows that I am going. I think he must have been warned in a dream. I have spoken to no one, to no one at all, you understand ? But he knows. For the first time he is going to oppose a wish of mine. The Palace guards are to be doubled at night. You must drive fast this evening so as to put the police off the track, if we want to be able to go on conversing undisturbed. My father is now subject to the most violent fits of anger about you. . . . You are suspect. All the change that he has observed in me he attributes to your influence.'

The Prince stopped to eject a jet of mahogany saliva into the betel spittoon.

Renaud could not take his eyes off that calm handsome face, vividly lit up beneath the electric light. The round dark nostrils looked like beauty spots above the mouth, a mouth of the colour that collectors of Chinese monochromes call 'mules' liver.' In full face, Jāli had the Olympian hardness of certain statues of Angkor. In profile, the curve of the cheeks, the rounded features and soft contours, the always parted lips, gave him a certain weakness and naiveté which spoilt the effect and accentuated his slightly simian appearance. But seen from three-quarter view the long, falling robe, the open hands with their rosy palms 'taking the earth to witness,' in the words of the Buddhist iconography, he was at once the young son of the Sakyas and the Child among the Doctors.

'Your Highness looks like the Perfect One Himself,' said Renaud.

'May his example come to my help!' answered Jāli.

Then he was silent. What new duties or new desires were contending behind those cunning, guarded eyes, almost invisible at the corner of the flattened eyelids where they curved into the root of the nose? Then he added: 'The Buddha himself found it necessary to leave his father. Remember. . . .'

He quoted the passage from the Pali Scriptures. . . . Coming from his yellow, entirely beardless face, these words, translated into Franco-English, sounded strange.

Renaud knew Asiatics were intelligent, but he did not believe they were so prompt. The guards were, in fact, doubled, and patrols went about at night. . . .

A few days later, after luncheon he was seized by severe pain. He sent a specimen of his urine to the pharmacy of the Catholic Mission, which replied that the analysis was negative. As the pain did not cease he went and had himself examined by the Fathers. The tests were repeated, and traces of arsenic were found. Renaud expressed his astonishment that the specimen of his urine that he had sent two days before had been found to be pure.

'Are you sure it was yours?' asked the holy men with a smile.

Renaud was much amused with this attempt to poison him, and made himself rice and chocolate in his room.

'They must think me very important,' he thought. 'I feel quite overcome.'

Two weeks passed. These events, far from interrupting the intercourse of the two young men, made it even more intimate.

'I wonder how far a father's love can go?' said Jāli.

'It has gone a good distance already,' thought Renaud.

'And yet,' the Prince added, 'nothing will keep me back . . . my destiny is not here . . . among the swamps of ignorance. . . .'

'One can achieve one's salvation everywhere, and especially here,' Renaud objected, 'since, speaking generally, these adventures are all of them merely individual experiences.'

'When one belongs to a Royal Race, it is other people who matter, not oneself. We are a small, backward, almost savage people. The important things that happen in the world do not happen at Karastra.'

'In history,' said Renaud; 'it has always been the humble who have shown the way. What is needed to-day is not so much to help the spirit to triumph as to resist the encroachment of matter. With you, matter counts for nothing: your ancient wisdom, your life in constant contact with the Invisible, your moral tranquility, your greatness, comes from that. Thanks to all these, you were able to stand up against the first benefits of the white man, his machinery, his weapons, his alcohol, and his personnel for export. And you have not succumbed like the rest of this misguided continent which only wants to get rid of us to be freer to practise our errors.'

'It is only too easy to conquer when there is no struggle.'

'The real treasures of the East are not hidden in the esoteric jungle of Indian wisdom,' added Renaud, 'or in the soil of hide-bound, egoistic China, in the ashes from the blast furnaces of Osaka, in the sands of Mesopotamia, seared to-day by the myriad ruts of caterpillar-tractors, or behind those *moucharabiehs*, deserted now by all the young creatures who have shed their veil and exchanged the Crescent for the Muscovite sickle. They are here, your Highness. It is here that Europe should learn how to emerge from its degradation; and you should help it.'

This appeal to solidarity savoured too much of the West to make much impression on the Prince: and he replied, with a vague gesture of fatalism:

'The world was created for the white races and for them alone. If they perish by their own hand, after a domination as brief as it was brilliant, that is doubtless because the hour is come for them to die and for us perhaps to live.

Anyhow, even if it is only a question of personal experience, no one shall keep me in ignorance. I shall ignore my father's wishes, since it must be so. Already I feel things giving way, I don't know where to turn, and something must be done.'

Renaud looked questioningly at his companion. The Prince's eyes were closed, he was sitting cross-legged, nursing one foot.

'I must see everything,' he murmured—'know everything.'

Outside, the grasshoppers were shrill. From far away across the water came the echoes of the hooters in the factories: in the Palace a bronze drum was booming: and then silence fell once more.

The Prince called his Aide-de-Camp to the telephone, and gave him some brief orders. Then, turning to Renaud:

'In four nights,' he said, 'there is to be a fête at the Polo Club. We will take advantage of the occasion. . . . You will prepare for a long absence. Don't forget the headlights.'

BOOK ONE: II

WHEN Renaud pulled up the car at the edge of the polo ground, he knew nothing of the journey he was to undertake. He had filled up with petrol and oil, collected his papers, and was now waiting. Perhaps they were going to the more distant of the Prince's palaces, the one in the North, in the mountains, where the people were loyal and devoted; in the middle of the teak forests, where the bodyguards were tattooed all over, except in the palms of their hands and the soles of their feet.

It was a gala evening, with a Court ballet, given by the King to the Karastra team, before the Singapore Tournaments. A thousand or so spectators were sitting under a tent, wide open to the night. It was not unlike an August night at the 'Alcazar d'été.' Renaud got out of the car and came up to try and get a sight of the King, whom he did not know.

The native generals, in pointed helmets, the representative of the Holy See, bearded and girdled with silk, the Corps Diplomatique which, from motives of courtesy, and to make believe that it was not really so hot, were melting away in cloth uniforms, the Royal Family—Renaud could distinguish them all in the rows of backs that met his eye. On the stage, the child-dancers, their little open mouths hardly more than so many receptacles for betel-nut, with lowered eyes, and bent-back fingers, and golden claws for nails, their metallic arms outstretched like those of candelabra, moved impassively backwards and forwards, applauded by a chorus of guttural cries, and accompanied by a raucous trumpeting from the orchestra—a veritable musical pandemonium. Suddenly Renaud saw them fall upon their knees, raise their arms and touch the ground with their foreheads. The fold of a screen was moved aside: a sharp noise was heard, and then a few abrupt words, no doubt the end of some discussion.

Everyone had guessed but no one stirred. The King had entered his box: the Navel of the World, Dispenser of the Elements, had his face smeared with diluted lime, like a Polynesian war mask. His quick feline movements were like those of a large, majestic and somewhat obese cat. He sank into a red leather armchair (by Maple). Electric fans hummed about his feet, so that his silk garments—a sort of pyjama suit much crumpled from uneasy siestas—stuck to his legs. He looked as if he had just got out of bed. Behind him stood the Crown Prince, looking round the room, wearied by the light, the music, and the insistent rhythms, dully beaten out by the dancers' heels: he remained thus without exchanging a word with his father. Behind them were the favoured courtiers, some greenish in hue and the others almost black, Mongoloids and Negritos. Then came the concubines on duty that night, and the Princesses, the King's sisters, vowed to an eternal celibacy, because there is no one for them of rank equal to their own and they may not degrade themselves by marrying an inferior. Kneeling women offered soups, meats, game, fish, jellies, tea and sauces. The dishes came up sealed from the kitchens, and the appropriate official removed the silver covers and made believe to taste them.

Renaud watched the golden pyramids formed by the dancers on the stage: on their heads was a spiral erection like the bell-towers of their country, over their ears the serpent motive, and on their shoulders a gilt projection suggesting the angles of a roof, so that they looked like their own native architecture come to life, like the river temples set in motion.

King Indra had just dined, and, from motives of courtesy, he belched. He sat motionless and silent, his hands upon his knees and watched the performance without giving a sign of pleasure or approval. From time to time he inserted a finger into one of his cheeks. He looked dull and sad, as if he realised that all efforts to detain his son would be useless. Without losing their impassiveness, his vacant eyes, like gashes in his yellow skin, moved darkly from the stage to the audience. He knew, as he could not fail to do, every act and every thought of those present, for his life had been spent in having them watched, or in spying on them personally, but he seemed to see nothing. Perhaps, when all was said, it was his own son whom he knew and understood the least. He had given him everything. What more did Jāli want? Where did he want to go? To look for allies to help him to win the throne? The King knew better than anyone how bad his health was, and he had often thought about abdicating. . . . He made up his mind to mention the matter to his depilator.

In the meantime he yawned, got up mechanically, looking on the verge of collapse, and without a word of greeting to anyone abruptly turned his back on the public and left the performance, still chewing dry tea with his black lacquer teeth.

The adventure was about to begin. Not a breath of air. It was one of those terrible tropical nights when the evening storm had not yet burst. Renaud was at the wheel. The Prince arrived, escorted by the High Officers of the Court.

'Home,' he said, loudly.

The car moved off along the road to the Palace.

'Faster, faster,' said the Prince.

When they reached the Jotâvana Pagoda, he climbed over into the front and sat beside Renaud, shouting to him to take the road to the North. They sped past the sluggish canals, spanned by marble bridges from which natives were fishing at midnight among the great green sheet-iron water lilies. They were already far from the city, above which could be seen the reddish glare of the blast furnaces in the rice peeling factories. At the end of two hours, having covered more than a hundred kilometres, they stopped at a ferry. Another car was waiting. The Aide-de-Camp, Colonel Prince Souryavong, came up for orders. He was piled into the car with a mass of luggage: two servants got up on the dashboards, and they set off once more and drove till dawn, always in a north-easterly direction.

The ground began to rise slightly and the waters receded. At last, thirty kilometres away, an outline of green hills rose against the sky and the waters ceased: high above the chain of the Elephants loomed a purple-violet storm. Below, a sky of golden green announced the dawn: behind them the night still lay heavily on the land. Then the western sky became shot with lilac, pink, madder, and the oily green of harbour water, and it was daylight.

They avoided Krase and its barracks: at the aerodrome outside the town they stopped: the aeroplane of the Siamese postal service was waiting in readiness to start. The servants went by train.

The Prince turned to the smoking Bugatti, caressed it with his hand, and looking at it affectionately, bade it goodbye.

'I must leave her, Renaud. I shall not forget how she used to leap forward at the touch of one's foot, those four-wheel brakes of hers, and the roar of her exhaust over the sleeping country!'

He pointed to an airman who happened to be standing by:

'Tell him to take great care of her. I present her to him, for I do not expect to return. In half an hour we shall be flying over Bangkok, and in three hours we shall reach Cambodia,' added Jāli.

It was only then that Renaud learned that they were going to French Indo-China, and thence sail for Europe: and that his Oriental experiences were over.

BOOK

II

HOMELESS

BOOK TWO: I

HAVING reached Saigon without misadventure, the travellers waited a few days at the 'Continental' for the arrival of the *Felix Faure*, on which their cabins had been booked. They inspected Saigon, an inhabited jungle with avenues cut through its confusion, a cardboard theatre, two cinemas displaying the crimes and Arcadian diversions of Marie Antoinette, aperitifs, pharmacies, and shops of mortuary crowns: they spent their time on the terraces of cafés, chasing away the mosquitoes, and likewise the 'boys,' whose vicious, jeering manner was in strong contrast to the primitive ways of the natives of Karastra. Apart from the motor-cars, whose din nearly took off the top of his head, the Prince was not interested in anything: the suddenness of that nocturnal flight, the shock of that voluntary sacrifice to unknown Gods, prevented him dwelling on the picturesque side of the adventure: the surface of things concerned him no more: what is said of the dead, might almost have been said of him—that his days had been cut off. He let Renaud take the lead: in European dress and a sun helmet, motionless, passive, he waited on the pavement of the Rue Catinat for the sovereign Powers to serve him or crush him. Renaud, for his part, was able to indulge his incorrigible thirst for the new and marvellous: but, in spite of a violent liver attack, he carefully watched the telegrams of the various news agencies. Not a single mention of their flight. The doors of the Palace of Karastra had shut behind them in a truly Asiatic manner. He spent perspiring hours in the police offices, in lime-washed corridors, delighted to find once more in these latitudes, all those stiff, Philistine, sterile, official, in fact, truly military qualities which the First Empire stamped upon France once and for all, making the way clear for Communism. Besides, everybody came from Corsica. This, Renaud reflected, is where he would have been if he had done well at school. The local authorities were so anxious to see him leave the Far East that they gave him every facility for his return, and the Prince as well, whom he registered as a student.

These three days seemed interminable. Once or twice, before dinner, they made an expedition to the Tour de l' Inspection, or the quays. These latter are flecked with sunshine and shadow like the squares of a chess board, and on them stand Annamites in their long black robes of waxed satin, and Colonials in white linen. Beyond them stretched, in dreary perspective, the storehouses and offices of the Army, the Administration, and Technical Services. Surrounded by decayed boiler houses, a naval band, in ragged uniforms, seemed to be playing the *Internationale*: at closer quarters it proved to be nothing more exciting than *Lakmé*. Two very ancient dismantled cruisers, rusty skeletons exposing their mouldering intestines, were lying side by side against the jetty. Above their screws was a notice—

FISHING FOR MUSSELS PROHIBITED

'The French Far East Squadron,' explained Renaud. 'As you may see, no aggressive intentions. . . .'

Jāli let himself be taken about, impassive, observant and dumb, a somewhat burdensome child.

One night, being so tormented by his liver that he could not sleep, Renaud got up. It was the hour when the floor grows cool, and he lay down upon it, naked. His room opened into that of the Prince. Everything was silent and at rest, except for the lizards and the deep whir of the electric fans on the ceiling. Across the doorway slept the two servants Uok and Kruot, lying on their backs like murdered corpses, with their heads on the trunks containing the bedding, the cooking utensils and the jewels. They were sleeping on the bare floor, because the sight and use of sheets still frightened them. The moonlight fell on the square cubes of the mosquito curtains. Inside one of them, Jāli, naked also, except for a Java loincloth, slept, as though he were lying in the heart of an opal. Between his legs, and to prevent them sticking together from the nocturnal sweat, was placed lengthwise that kind of wooden bolster that is called, south of the Equator, 'a Dutch wife.' Renaud felt in the position of an elder brother: an affection full of responsibility. Yesterday he was merely a body-servant of the Crown Prince: now he had become the master. All that had happened was due to him. He had, indeed, a proper contempt for eloquence, but he was none the less amazed that words could determine acts and set in motion so well-oiled a wheel of consequences. Because of him, of certain ideas—and, for the matter of that, he would have been equally ready to defend their opposites—launched at an opportune moment into a young, plastic, and imaginative mind, these men had left everything, abandoned palaces, broken through the most rigid social framework, and come to sleep here, in a hotel bedroom. They were quite indifferent, and calmly acquiesced, being well aware, in their fatalism, that no man is allowed to decide for himself. They seemed quite insensible to the distance that already separated them from their past, to the abysses that were to open before them on the morrow.

The *Felix Faure* came to anchor. They took possession of the few cabins that had not been reserved by the 'Colony.' Renaud displayed this new world to Jāli: dried-up emaciated officials, like birds who have to feed themselves seed by seed: traders, of a contrary habit of body, corpulent, without necks and with heads like crocodiles: young planters, in the manner of the Far West, who have replaced the old alcoholic sanctimonious colonists, so dear to the hearts of realistic writers. All of them with that horrible Cochin-China complexion, the colour of a suppurating wound.

The hoots of the siren cut short the farewells.

The passengers made their arrangements for the month's voyage. The boat broke up into cliques; the reactionary party, a small society of officers, a handful of freemasons, mothers of families, bachelors, invalids (subdivided again like the various wards of hospitals, into sufferers from fever, abscess on the liver, etc.). . . .

Jāli and his suite did not move outside their cabins and lived on rice—drinking the water in which it was boiled—and dried fish, bought at ports of call. Renaud described them as his Siamese cats, referring to their diet. He read and played the banjo, lying in his berth and not going out, for he was still ill, although the sea air had already done him good. They had bought a quantity of books at Saigon, and did not need any other company. Their cabin looked on to the deck; and through the open port hole they could hear the conversation of the passengers which broke in upon what the Buddha calls 'the sacred silence of the siesta.' He culled the flowers of it, pressed them, and made an excellent collection of Far-Eastern fatuities.

'You may believe me if you like, Monsieur, but I managed to get my household expenses down to two piastres a day; so I was able to put aside. . . .'

'It is true that there is no expense for heating:

but there is the cost of the ice-machine and the electric fan. Always something ! '

' Believe me, it is by economy that we dominate the Oriental. . . .'

' I have actually known nights in January in which I slept under blankets and put on an overcoat to go out.'

' Poor fellow ! He is very tired : he won't get to Aden. . . .' And the word ' tired ' had a sinister meaning.

' I said to myself, as all women do : ' I can't imagine anything more delightful than to go and live out there on an island with the man of one's heart.' And when you get there, good Lord ! You try to sleep and you are stifled : if you go out at night there are mosquitoes : you can't bathe because of the sharks : you can't eat fruit for fear of dysentery. Never marry an inspector of Customs and live in Panama.'

' As a matter of fact, Bell Pagodas, serpent charmers, opium, theosophy, Madame Chrysanthéme—it's all the same thing, the Yellow Peril, what ? . . .'

' We're going straight to Bolshevism.'

' It's no good trying to understand.'

' Thank you ; I never take alcohol before sunset.'

' Quinine . . . piastres . . . leave . . . rubber on account. . . .'

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' Saigon is a little Marseilles.'

Renaud went into the Prince's cabin. Jāli was resting, his head on a Chinese pillow, like a hollow paving stone. Near him, sitting on his haunches, his knees up to his chin, the Colonel was practising the use of those, to him, unfamiliar implements, the spoon and fork: he was trying to give up using wooden toothpicks to deal with a slice of water melon. The books read in the course of the day lay strewn about the floor: a *Cornelius Nepos*, *Modern Architecture* by Le Corbusier, and the *Meditations*. From his earlier education in the Chinese classics, Jāli retained an admiration for the poets and a respect for the places they had celebrated. The French Romantics inspired him, as they do all young Asiatics at the moment. Should he see the Lake of which Lamartine had sung? Where was Musset's tomb? (Renaud knew nothing about all this.) And, lashed by the monsoon, the spray poured hissing through the port-hole. Jāli was pensive.

' I wish my skin was white,' he sighed.

Renaud said nothing: but he ruminated upon the mysterious power of the white man over the coloured peoples. Perhaps, at the beginning of all things, as some asserted, there were no yellow peoples, but only two races: the white race, with straight, light hair and eyes, creators of the world; and, in contrast to them, the negroids, a race of Calibans impervious to all improvement, childish, destructive: nothing but these two symbols of good and evil. Asiatic idols, women, and actresses were all whitened with powder: the lotus and the guardian elephant were white: white too were the moon, and the robes of the Brahman and the astrologer. White stood for serenity, purity, the Divine. 'Who would say so now?' thought Renaud. 'What have we done with out prestige? We have only ourselves to blame. We should not have lost face as we have done, if we had been able to keep the Aryan pride of being white. But who can instruct us in that pride to-day?'

Loud laughter from a neighbouring cabin.

'What about a hand of poker?'

'If you like, but a proper one, for something worth playing for!'

'Poker is the Rugby of card games.'

'What limit?'

‘ None—except our shirts.’

‘ I’ll go and collect some people. . . .’

‘ Only whites, of course. . . .’

‘ What are you thinking of, Renaud ? ’

‘ Can it be that sort of thing that we shall have to defend against Asia ? ’ said Renaud, pointing to the players. ‘ You know what I feel, only too often : but I have no choice : they are my brothers.’

At Singapore, where the boat put in, while stokers, money changers, fruit sellers, and conjurers were crowding on board, the Governor’s Aide-de-Camp was announced. He came to greet Jāli on behalf of the English Government, who had heard of his presence on board. Jāli bowed and thanked him, implacably polite and patient, evading questions from force of habit and answering everything with a smile.

This visit attracted attention on board. It was reported that an important sovereign was travelling incognito, and a thousand other silly tales were spread about. The passengers became interested in Jāli. He often dressed in Chinese costume : ‘ Fancy wearing such clothes ! Long robes ! what a dress for a man ! ’

‘He must be a “Celestial.”’

And the women raised their two forefingers to indicate they knew what China was like.

‘I don’t believe he can be so depraved.... He is just unemotional....’

‘There are some people in the Far East who are quite all right, I assure you. They never scratch and they do not smell unpleasantly.’

‘If those people weren’t stupid, they would talk!’

Jāli and Renaud only went out at night. They used to pace the sloping deck till dawn, since passengers were not allowed to sleep outside on that boat. Then the children are silent. The bar, with its diverse liquors, chained up like dangerous animals, is closed. Slander, that poisonous herb of the Tropics, is at rest. The darkness, although the air might be no cooler, inclined them, as formerly at Karastra, to talk and exchange ideas.

Thus they continued until they reached the Red Sea: then one evening, when off Port Sudan, there came a chill in the air, the first time for so long: and the wind blew from the North. Next day no one on the boat was wearing white except Jāli and Renaud, who had left Karastra in such a hurry and so preoccupied that they had brought no woollen clothes. All the passengers looked as if they were in mourning. Dresses devised by the modistes of Saigon, old suits dating from the last leave.

While Renaud prepared his companion for Europe, new constellations, like flags, were hoisted in the heavens. The Prince had to learn the whole sky over again, and he hardly ever put down his binoculars. At last the land came into view. Clouds of sooty smoke, like long dark terraces, lowered on the horizon.

'Marseilles! Buddha was still alive when it was founded,' said Renaud.

'What is that dominating the city?'

'Money, Communism, bouillabaisse?'

'No, over there, that golden point, above the smoke?' asked Jāli.

'Notre Dame de la Garde, a Basilica.'

'In our country no temple is allowed to dominate a landscape.'

'Because the landscapes themselves are temples.'

'You have become Asiatic, Renaud.'

'No, your Highness.'

The boat came nearer. From the earth rose geometrical houses, divided by streets, and pierced by apertures covered by some gleaming substance.

Jāli had never seen glazed windows.

BOOK TWO: II

THERE is no need to wait for other evenings than the first to relate the encounter of Jāli and the West: none were more characteristic. Renaud had stayed behind in Paris: the Prince and his suite had travelled through to London, the goal of their journey, and had put up at a hotel in the Strand, an inferior hotel, because they had no money. They were given icy rooms on the sixth floor, looking on to interior courts like miniature oubliettes. Uok and Kruot were shivering in the white clothes they were still wearing; Jāli and the Colonel were dressed in khaki tunics, relics from the American army supplies, bought at Marseilles. Renaud had to explain the nature of wool, they had never seen any. They all kept together, far from the Europeans with their great white teeth, which frightened them: they sat huddled against each other all day, smoking the same hookah, and drinking tea, hidden in the London darkness, like

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A motor bus came by, and on it was an advertisement of large green cucumbers. Jāli who knew none but flat colours, and was quite unfamiliar with perspective, took them for real cucumbers—which may serve to show how everything was to him a trap or a surprise. Exhausted, and unaccustomed to walking and to heavy European clothes, Jāli mounted the bus and went on top. Being without an overcoat he was shivering with cold and drew the waterproof aprons round his shoulders. He rode through the poor quarters of the city where the sweets and banana stalls provided the sole means of illumination; ‘pubs’ and drinking shops, whose ornament of casks could be seen through the dirty windows, and popular restaurants divided into compartments like those in Chinese hotels, where the guests tear up the meat with their teeth. When they reached the terminus somewhere in the East, he got out and sat down on a bench. There the Crown Prince of Karastra thought of his women, his mosaic palaces, and of King Indra. He had traversed vaster distances than those described in all the Chronicles to arrive where he was. And he was exhausted. It is not the will to do great things that is lacking in Orientals; it is the strength.

Some drops fell on his hard skull: soon the rain began to fall vertically, like the flush of a lavatory, and the pavements were lacquered with moisture. What he felt was as far from disgust as from pleasure. He was where he wanted to be: he avoided nothing, far from it. It was simply that his eyes were opening. Let the Western world approach. . . .

A woman drew near, her waterproof streaming with rain, her black straw hat bending under the weight of the shower, and Jāli answered her courteously. She was hungry, but she did not beg for food. After a moment she even invited Jāli to have a bite with her. They started and turned in to the Commercial Road, among a populace, in part Asiatic—emaciated Hindoos, wrecks of Chinamen, and consumptive Jews—wallowing in a pea-soup fog. Jāli was awake but dreaming. His weary legs splashed through the puddles, his head was on fire with the lights. He looked at the woman by his side: her hair began to look like shavings, curled by the rain: she looked quite young, vicious, and very poor: she had green eyes tilted outwards towards her temples like those of tigers, and spots of colour on her cheeks that were never burnt by any sun we know. Her English was poor: she was French.

'You're a darling,' she said: 'I like niggers. Though I lived for three months with a Chinaman in Lime Street. It cost me a lot to find out what swine they are: and the English too. They're the worst brutes. They have to be tight before they think of a woman. Frenchmen won't let you alone on the pavement, but they're nice boys afterwards. And London always makes my head ache—it isn't half so pretty as Panama—except it's a better place for making a bit, of course.' She was tall and graceful, and moved with a regular swinging gait.

'Well, here we are at home,' she said, 'wait for me.' She had stopped opposite No. 432.

'My name is Angèle, Angèle Ventre: on the first floor. Will you remember? I'll go and fetch the key from the shop opposite.'

They went upstairs.

Jāli looked round him. He did not know where to sit down. It was the first time he had seen how a European lived: it was also the first time he had ever been in a poor person's house. This combination of misery, evil odours and melancholy does not exist in the Far East: the needy seem to have chosen their condition, like a profession: they keep out of the way of the rich. And yet, in the West, where no one thinks of anything but money, why is there not at least enough for all?

On a straw-seated chair a candle was guttering. Yesterday there had not been a shilling in the house, and the electric light had been cut off.

‘I’ve only got this room to bring my friends to, so we must wait until the old woman’s asleep or at least dozing.’ In a corner of the room, behind a wooden partition reaching halfway up the wall, like those in pig-sties, there was a mattress on the floor, on which a woman was lying.

‘It is my mother, Madame Ventre. . . . Make yourself at home,’ she went on : ‘I’ve only got cold water, you know.’

Jāli was full of ingenuous amazement. In Karastra he had only seen clean Europeans, who had themselves polished and powdered and brushed at every opportunity. He did not know that the great nations had their dung heaps. It gave him more confidence.

‘Shall I put out the candle ?’ said Angèle. ‘We shall see all right by the light outside.’

The street lamp, whose top could just be seen, did in fact send a ray of bright pink light through the square panes of the sash window. Angèle laid a newspaper on the bed, for their feet. ‘Kiss me,’ she said. She was taller than he, beautiful, with her tight-fitting frock and her bare bosom, firm as that of a young wrestler, white and burning like snow. They shivered. Jāli thought of the Asiatic nights among his women, where they had to powder their bodies with talc before they could embrace. Jāli kissed her as he had seen white people do on the cinema, a process that has no relation to the prolonged sniff that constitutes the Oriental kiss.

'Is that all?' she asked. She looked at the Prince with admiration and contempt. 'I see what it is,' she said, 'you're one of the lazy ones, you want to be loved, you do: soft as a Prince, they say.'

Jāli will never forget the taste of white skin.

Soon they began to feel cold and hungry: Jāli did not yet know those two monsters of the North, those two wild beasts that have to be killed several times a day. This explains the truceless struggle, the eternal effort, the inability of these people to stop for an instant, or to fall without perishing. They do but attack to defend themselves the better. The woman is lying beside him, but she is not at rest. Those mighty forces of the West which amaze him and which he has begun to hate—supply and demand, those two racks on which Western humanity is stretched—behind then both is surely the fear of cold and hunger.

Angèle got up and went out to get some beer and a pork pie.

'Stay where you are,' she said. 'Don't run away. You needn't be afraid I'm going to do you in.'

Still lying on the bed Jāli considered why he was there. That impulse which made him leave the West End, was it identical with that which drew him, like a lover, from his palace and the Forbidden City? In any case, he did not feel at all as if he had lost his way. Far from it; in that damp bed, in the darkness, a fugitive, deserted by everyone, he was contented and master of himself: what he had wanted is now at his disposal. Where were the palaces? Where was the silk bolster on which the wife on duty laid a handful of jasmine petals every evening? What matter? The official manifestations of absolute authority had never given him this impression of power. If Renaud could see him that moment, lying not far from Poverty asleep....

Jāli got up. Angèle's mother was sleeping heavily. A hole in the pillow was filled with grey hair, like the stuffing exuding from a burst arm-chair. He approached and bent over her, over that odour of fermented poverty: she looked like the victim of some vast, appalling, collective crime. Everything in the West seems to unjust. ... Jāli bent down and kissed the old woman's forehead. Why did he do that? There is no old age at Karastra; life is so short in the Tropics, and nature, like a poet fastidious in the choice of images, is in too great a hurry to melt down her productions and try other combinations. This old woman, with her sunken wrinkles and swollen veins, seemed the ludicrous conclusion of many centuries of scientific researches to delay the payment of a natural debt. Why was this body still breathing? It should have long ago disappeared. In its thirst for existence, the West over-populates the earth with a vast and useless horde of old people and creates a condition which is neither life nor death, like this aged crone, moaning in her dreams, because she has been taught how to maintain a hold on the gentle slippery slope that leads to annihilation.

Jāli lit the candle, put his clothes in order, and went out quietly. He went down the steep narrow stairs, and forced himself to assume an excessive calmness of demeanour so as to depart with dignity from these desolate purlieus, these houses of affliction. He felt so cheerful that he wanted to get far away from such agonies. At Karastra, not so long ago, victims were burnt alive on pyres so magnificent that their last sigh was envied by all who saw them.

The following evening Jāli put on his still damp clothes and his muddy shoes, and went out again; he could not stay in his narrow lodging. He placed one foot before another like a man walking in a dream. If his luggage, which had not arrived, should be definitely lost, he could not wait any longer. Idleness, in climates such as these, is impossible: but his long supple fingers were useless for work. As he looked at the Grenadier Guards in St. James's Park, he wondered whether he could enlist: but these European wars, in which no countries are conquered and no cities sacked, are sorry struggles. He passed St. Martin's Theatre: women wrapped in shawls were sleeping on the steps.

He passed St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, the crypt of which serves as a night refuge. Would he have to come to that? The only money he had in his room was the native currency in the form of shells, and he did not dare to enter any bank in the City to change it. The City frightened him, steep and sheer like the stone quarries of Syracuse, a prison from which no man escapes, and from which that strip of unbroken paper, the English cheque, begins its journey round the globe. . . . Jāli had never paid for anything, nor even thought about money. If one is obliged to think about it, the shops cease to be an amusement and become a menace; every advertisement cries: 'Beware: this life is not for you since you have no money.' Peace, health, genius, joy, all seemed advertised upon these walls, and in the newspapers the price of everything is quoted. At last, under the burden of these voiceless calculations, the Prince humbled himself and bent his head: he felt not merely feeble and inexperienced, but unconvinced and in revolt. He had read in English novels charming descriptions of the 'vie de Bohême.' All lies! London was clearly hard upon the poor, with its fearsome hospitals, to which the infected lazarettes and leper colonies of Karastra seemed to him infinitely preferable; its workhouses like prisons; its biting winds; its savage refusal to allow anyone to live on nothing; its arrogant British proletariat, so highly organised that the poor are excluded, as they are from the entire Anglo-Saxon world, which was never intended for them. Jāli was cold; he understood those words which are so often heard in appeals for charity in the West: no fire! Here fire is worshipped, in the East it is feared; fire, the enemy of coolness, the symbol of capricious love, the element of destruction. But what Westerner could desire to see extinguished that which cost him so many centuries to light? What European would not shudder to learn that Nirvana means extinction?

Jāli found himself, as on the day before, in the

Commercial Road. He stopped in front of Angèle's house: but he did not like to go in, for fear she might be with another man, or be unpleasant to him. He was also afraid of not finding her and of being confronted with the old woman who talked in her sleep, which frightened him. So he went on again. This evening the sky was almost clear of clouds. Jāli bought a quart of a kind of nuts that are given to the elephants in Karastra. Nothing disgusted him. The Prince in whose palace aromatic herbs were burned to purify the air when anyone came in who was not of the Royal caste, wandered into all manner of filthy yards and alleys. He went on, inspired by a sort of indescribable ecstasy, as though he were in some imaginary world. In that moment, all things seemed beyond the bounds of probability. Suddenly he heard horrid sounds of music, which appeared to come from the pavement. Jāli looked down: a man without legs or arms was playing the clarionet with his nostrils. His body was dressed in a military uniform and covered with colonial war medals.

'Give us a penny, Sir,' said the man stopping. 'I'm a cripple, and I've got a dose as well. I soon shan't have a nose to play a dance to you with."

Jāli was seized with panic. He believed the West had been definitely cleansed of such evils and agonies. This human crustacean, hanging on to life by its decaying nose, this sly and menacing fragment of something human, which fixed him with its eye, and bemoaned its woes upon its flute, appalled him. He leaped over the mutilated object, and fled, with some sense of awful satisfaction at this spectacle of Western advantages.

On the following day Jāli might have thought it all a nightmare: the city lay basking under a soft and creamy air. He got up, prepared to enjoy that indemnity that is given by rest and bestowed upon us by an immanent justice. The sun shone—in a manner of speaking. Renaud had just arrived, and with him all the luggage, recovered.

Renaud had disobeyed the doctors by joining Jāli: he proposed to return to France later for treatment.

'The English surgeons shan't have me,' he said.

Jāli compared Renaud to the English, whom he was not unlike, in his Nordic physique. But, under their stiff exterior, he suspected that the English were soft, lethargic and flabby, in thought as in word. His friend was bold, persuasive, and deliberate in speech and act. Renaud set about the discovery of England, that ancient Norman colony, with much less bitterness than the English show when investigating the United

States. He seemed so good-humoured and sociable, as he walked the streets, and withal so modest, that Jāli felt his heart go out to him more than ever.

'I feel all the time as if I were playing a game,' Renaud explained. 'The English are the only people who believe in what they do. That is why they remind one so persistently of chubby children dressed like grown-up persons. You will see how they contrast with the bilious austerity of France, where everyone is green with envy, yellow with anxiety, and black with need.'

Jāli told Renaud of his first experiences in London, and his meeting with Angèle.

'So you've met a countrywoman of mine? Bravo!' said Renaud. 'I'm glad your first experience of my people, after myself, was a prostitute. These French prostitutes abroad are often admirable women, energetic, knowing not a single word of any language but their own, solitary, with no emigration-offices to help them, rejected by the Consulates, condemned by their compatriots, defending themselves against all manner of ruffians and the Police as well, bitterly economical, but, keeping intact their love for their country. The higher French women are in the social scale, the more they become denationalised: after our nuns, our prostitutes are often our finest patriots.'

For the first time since his departure from Asia, Jāli thought about making an inventory of the jewels that he had ordered to be brought away, at the time of his flight. When the jeweller, with whom the Court of Karastra was accustomed to deal, arrived from Bond Street, and saw them in this shabby room, he nearly collapsed. He looked at Jāli in the same way as women looked at the contents of his shop. There was not room for all the jewels on the bed. There were necklaces of pink pearls, bars of gold, Burmese pigeon-blood rubies from the mines of Mogok, black sapphires from Chantaboun which cure snake-bite, toe rings, enamelled anklets so heavy that they seemed rather the product of the armourer's than the jeweller's art, flawless emeralds like menhirs and, loose in a handkerchief, a heap of unset diamonds. As a first instalment the jeweller advanced some tens of thousands of pounds on the Royal diadems.

Jāli then left the hotel in the Strand and put up at Claridge's, with true Oriental indifference to the ups and downs of fortune. He sent out Colonel Prince Souryavong to buy two motor cars, horses, gramophones, and clothes. The Colonel took with him for these transactions his Chinese scales to weigh the money given to him as change, which much amused the tradesmen. Jāli, for his part, hurried to the booksellers; he took Renaud with him everywhere, and gave him a few handfuls of pearls.

After luncheon an important English official presented himself. The Government was fully cognisant of Jāli's adventure. This official was a worthy representative of the stupidest and ablest nation in Europe; he carried a top hat, which put the Prince on his guard, for his experience was that when a European comes to see you in a top hat it was always to ask for something. The Crown offered Jāli, out of deference to his rank, immediate admission to one of the 'good' Cambridge Colleges, good, in the sense of being usually closed to foreigners. Jāli would have preferred France, but a few days later he accepted the offer to go and learn the King's English, when Renaud had despaired of getting any answer from Paris, where nobody had ever heard of the Kingdom of Karastra.

Thus Jāli fell a victim to his high position. Although he took his meals in his own rooms, the celebrated Casimir was there, deserting, for a moment, the restaurant on the ground floor to do honour to this new Royal Highness, superintending everything, communicating with the waiters by a glance, directing the movement of the little india-rubber-wheeled trolleys that brought the dishes along the corridors, just as patients in a hospital are brought back from the operating room; the Italian spies are at their posts; a tap upon the door may introduce a discreet detective, a tray of iced drinks, or a word of welcome from Buckingham Palace. All manner of curries were devised, and a *soi-disant* Oriental cuisine, all quite uneatable: the visitors from Karastra could only digest caviare, on which they lived henceforward. But alas, they no longer dared to raise the bowl to their mouths and eat with their fingers or chopsticks: they had to acquiesce in these knives and forks, which had to be incessantly transferred from one hand to another: these plates put so foolishly far away that the food fell on the floor in transit. The rooms were filled with the purchases of the day, marvellous contrivances of the West, electric machines for sharpening pencils, furs to keep off the cold, an apparatus for extracting pips from fruit, incubators in which the germ could be seen developing through the egg shell. Outside each door Uok and Kruot stood in a long coat and trousers of black silk, stiffly and watchfully on guard.

A fortnight passed in this way. Jāli felt no less an exile in luxury than in poverty, Claridge's and the Commercial Road being, in his mind, in no way divided by their conventional and invisible barriers. What continued to dazzle him were the lights. He was astonished at that strange hotel life, the meals and pleasures taken in common, invented by people without acquaintances, who rely on hotel lounges for making some: whereas, in the East, true luxury consists in being separated from one's fellows, and always invisible. And Jāli could never get over that extraordinary confusion of classes and positions, everyone claiming a rank not his own, these drawing rooms in which pugilists and actors venture to speak to aristocrats, or men of letters condescend to talk to tradesmen. The sexes, too, are mixed together: moreover, it is in public that women are most ready to appear undressed: so much so that in his earlier days, Jāli thought they put on close fitting garments of skin, not imagining that it was their own skin and that they were naked. Like the women of Karastra, these daughters of millionnaires had a fresh dress every day—but on the Equator, it could be gathered off the trees every morning. When they show themselves in public places, they wear their finest jewels, all of them at once: they do not know how to wear them in accordance with the rank of the guests, or at certain moons. He was stupefied by the stage and the fox-trot: that men should dance themselves, or entrust their wives to other men for this purpose, that they should interrupt their meal more than once and come back to talk in a state of perspiration, when there were performers paid to do these things, all this seemed to him quite incredible. Judges who have pronounced sentences of death in the course of the day, Members of Parliament who have passed new laws that very evening, disport themselves, with paper hats upon their heads, rattles in their hands, and their feet entangled in coloured streamers. Jāli thought of the end of the world: that dance of Siva, in which the God shall at last impose upon the earth a rhythm contrary to that of Creation and, like a potter gone mad, who suddenly turns his wheel upside down, smash his work into fragments.

Renaud had departed to make preparations for the sojourn at Cambridge. Jāli felt even more than usually at a loss in the face of all these new impressions, now that Renaud was not there to comment on them with his characteristic humour, that agile mind of his so apt to solve and explain everything. Jāli stayed in cautious retirement, notwithstanding his desire for knowledge, once more a victim to that Asiatic hostility and pride, so averse to any appearance of ignorance and dreading to lose face by any display of surprise. He lived without seeing anyone, though, in spite of his defensive attitude, wide awake and observant.

BOOK TWO: III

JĀLI had longed for speed in those sluggish days at Karastra. Now he was asking for a brief respite. He had got thinner, but had he made any progress? He had collected so many new facts that he was staggering under the burden, dashing into every new experience without taking time to absorb it, asking questions without being able to wait for the answer, much as he wished to, anxious to prolong every moment, though he never had the time. He longed to recover that indifference to the passing hour, that lethargy that was the rhythm of his life in Asia. Meals eaten standing up, siestas interrupted by telephone calls, nights curtailed by radio concerts, days spent in receiving reporters and idle enquirers, in getting rid of crooks, in showing the door to collectors of autographs and various prospective female parasites, mornings passed without one glance towards the sky: that is the life of the West. H.E. Prince Tatnavong, the

Karastran Minister in London (there were several Karastran legations in Europe) who must have received orders to keep an eye upon the Crown Prince, positively haunted the corridors of Claridge's. He wanted above all to give large dinner parties in his honour, with the assistance of Lady Cunard. Western names and Western things began to dance before Jāli's eyes. 'If your Christ were to die to-day,' he said, 'He ought to be crucified upon a clock.'

However, soon he was fortunately out of reach, at Cambridge. A few hours had been enough. Renaud had to take lodgings in the town, because the authorities of Trinity College, to lay stress on the fact that their hands had been forced by the Foreign Office, and, moreover, put on their guard by the arrival of a French Secretary, in the capacity of courier, which seemed to show very little sense of what was proper on the part of a Prince—pretended that there were no rooms vacant in College. So Jāli took possession of a set of rooms in Sidney Street, genuine undergraduates' lodgings, with threadbare carpets, a dirty hip-bath, a worn-out toasting fork, a pipe-rack, a reproduction of *Christ with the Lantern* by Holman Hunt, and looking out on to an asphalt pavement lined with motor repair shops and windows full of neckties.

Jāli found Renaud in bed: his friend was in great pain and feared an abscess on the liver. He was resigned to getting no treatment. Jāli assumed the University gown, and went to lectures, all the lectures he could, with that insatiable thirst of the young Asiatic to learn, but to learn too quickly. He was in despair at not being able to learn chemistry in a month, and soon gave it up in favour of mineralogy (with that unavowed desire of the Oriental to pass as a master of the secrets of the Earth and its hidden treasures) : International Law did but tempt him for a moment, by the prestige of fashion. He wanted to force the West to disgorge its science and its superiorities which made him so impatient, but his attempt was made without effort, without system, in a hurry, and without realising that the most valuable lesson the West has to offer is, in fact, a method, the art of exact thinking.

From his sick bed, Renaud put a little order into this mass of information of which Jāli came, as though he could not help it, to unburden himself many times a day.

'Well, your Highness does not stand much chance of dying of intellectual starvation.'

He had to bestir himself to prevent Jāli becoming a Chinese 'student,' a dreadful Cantonese crudity turned out by the Latin Quarter or the Y.M.C.A. But, on the other hand, Renaud realised clearly that the English University would never change Jāli into a modern man, or anything but a substitute for a Hindu Prince, that is a caricature of an Englishman carried out in black and white.

'Your Highness,' he said, 'take my word for it, the polo mallet is not a weapon to defend a kingdom with in 1925.'

It was true that Jāli had resources denied to others, the privilege of being profoundly Royal, his haughty calm, his quiet manner, and the way in which he was naturally respected and served by everyone. But care had to be taken that the Prince, so emotional, so easily influenced, should not cease to be himself, when with all his crude wealth he came, like Asia, to receive the imprint of the West. Jāli had already left London harassed, dazzled and terrified: a fortnight was enough. The first days had been too hectic, the height too dizzy for a weak head.

Renaud reflected:

'In my case, the taste for the East passed over me like an attack of toothache: the contrary shock which the Oriental receives from contact with the West is evidently more dangerous. What we went out to look for no longer exists: we are amateurs of treasures, ransackers of tombs: we come too late: but the Asiatic finds more than ever in the West, for now everything is at his disposal. How can they fail to lose their heads?

My Dauphin must protect himself behind a suitable critical attitude of mind. But that is to begin at the end: in the hands of teachers he will, in the true Oriental tradition, neglect the spirit for the letter.'

However, matters did not altogether take the turn that Renaud expected. One evening Jāli came into his friend's room and sat on the bed.

'Do you know what I have been doing to-day?'

'Flying, making love? Reading the Lake Poets without getting your feet wet?'

'No,' replied Jāli—'I was going to the library to study Shakespeare, the Fount of Poetry: but libraries are like bazaars, what one brings back has very little relation with what one went to buy. In short, I happened to find a copy of the Dhammapada on one of the shelves. The very paper smelt of the East . . . it seemed so strange in this English fog, that felt like a noose round my neck, to plunge into praises of Him who knew how to break his chains. . . . Two students who were working near by, spoke to me when the lecture room closed and asked me about Buddhism. I did not know what to say. I know the texts well, I have always carried out my ritual obligations, but I have not got that missionary faith. . . . And then, as I was reading, I had forgotten the place, the time, and the West. So I departed, like the Buddha himself: when he was asked for an explanation of the world, he answered that the enquiry was useless for salvation. I pointed out to them, also, that the noblest of the Gods was an atheist.'

'Your Royal Highness will become unpopular with the Vice-Chancellor, if this goes on: Shelley was expelled from University College, for precisely that reason.'

'I don't know what to say to them. I cannot talk. Yet I should have liked to be useful. But how can one explain in Cambridge in 1925 what was proclaimed in India in the sixth century?'

'Who were they? English undergraduates?'

'No, one of them, Thomas Shannon, is Irish: the other, Hamilton Kent, is American. They told me they were sure that wisdom, which they were earnestly looking for, comes from the East. They don't belong to a good college.'

'Obviously not.'

'I have asked them to tea.'

Silence.

'Since I left my palace,' said Jāli, 'and I have no longer any official religious obligations, I find myself thinking more and more about the Buddha, and thinking of him as, together with yourself, the only friend I have had till now. Do you understand?'

'It is your way of feeling homesick. Buddhism is not practicable in Europe, Sir. Buddhism means neither desiring nor acting. But if the West does not act, she will die. It is only under the auspices of a few pessimists that Buddha has been able to show his face occasionally in this part of the globe.'

'Don't say that, Renaud. When the Perfect One was reproached for being a pessimist, you know what he replied: 'If medicine is pessimistic, then so am I.''

'But medicine is so, at least so far as I am concerned. The doctor came this evening... I was afraid of it, the third abscess on the liver is in view: I shall go and get myself operated on in Paris, as soon as I can move.'

'The Master of Medicaments is not always to be believed,' observed Jāli.

Jāli's impromptu friends came in at tea-time. They belonged to that large new class of students in the great English Universities that the brutality of the age, the absence of the 'old hands,' who had gone to the war and were no longer there to bully them, the opportunity, due to the exchange, of passing half the year in France, had made more inquisitive, or, in other words, more human. They have not wasted their time in drinking and getting into debt against the Musical Comedy background of an old England that has passed away, but they have been able to enter into contact with life. Not having to undergo the mechanism of examinations, the tyranny of official instruction, or the slavery of the regiment, their intelligences have developed freely and have grown at the same time as their bodies, their sensibilities and their characters. It is undoubtedly the effect of exceptional conditions. Foreigners—as in the case of Shannon and Kent—have, moreover, taken more advantage of them than the English themselves, hampered and choked by their families and their surroundings.

'The Prince excused himself yesterday,' said Shannon, speaking to Renaud, 'from giving us an account of the Buddha. Do tell him that we really want to know, because we want to live by and adapt ourselves to the new conditions: we have spent a long time looking for what is good in our generation and I think we have found it: we know how to adapt ourselves. In the words of the proverb, we have been thrown off the roof and we can fly. Contrasts mean very little to us. Every day in the papers you may read of young men of our age who are model assassins without, for that reason, giving up playing marbles; and, as for us, don't we read Tacitus in the morning, and then unload coal in the harbours in the afternoon, when the strikes are on? It was in this very place, within these noble walls, that my fellow countryman Wilde long ago denounced the supreme vice: which, in his view, was superficiality: a vice of which he was, as a matter of fact, himself the embodiment. Among the older generation there is to-day another supreme vice—I mean rigidity. The English like comfort, tradition, which consists in being surrounded by everything useful or convenient: but in the destitution of the present age, they labour and suffer in vain, without being willing to understand that marvellous modern comfort which is the exact contrary of this and consists in possessing nothing.'

'Stop, Shannon,' said Kent, 'You talk too much, as you always do. Besides every age has its characteristic vice. We shall have—indeed, we already have—ours.'

'I am coming to that, and that is why I spoke to the Prince without having been introduced,' Shannon went on. 'The vice, or what comes to the same thing, the characteristic of the years 1920-1930, is indifference. Our best books, from Gide to Proust, are manuals of indifference. The husbands who become devoted friends of their wives' lovers, the countries who fly at each other's throats after having been allied, generals—enemies the day before—who dine with each other with their feet on their dead soldiers, burglars who receive the Legion of Honour, murderers that the world finds so entertaining, all this is not madness, nor sentiment, nor perversity, but just indifference. I may mention that I have already written half a treatise on indifference. I am only looking for the forerunners, the masters: and that is why I am applying to you and to Buddha. What I like about him is that your Buddha is the first God to arrive in the world without any credentials: nothing in his hands or up his sleeves. This absence of intellectual outfit seems to me essentially modern. The Buddha is a monument of indifference, don't you think?'

'What gives me confidence,' added Kent, stammering a great deal (he obviously had six words for every hundred ideas), 'are the statistics: twenty-six centuries of faith, and four hundred and sixty-six millions of believers. Truly astronomical figures: only Ford could. . . .' Then followed two hours of examinations of conscience and a heap of tobacco-ash. Shannon had a charming Irish ease of manner, and a disarming flow of conversation. Kent was duller, simpler and more honest. It was really Jāli that interested them. As for Buddhism, they fell upon it and had disposed of it in five minutes.

Renaud looked at these 'freshers,' these 'blues' with the indulgence of an elder brother. He was eight years older than they, which corresponds to thirty years in former times. Their attack was quite different to his. He was a rebel and believed in nothing. But from the singular way he shut himself up to smoke, he was supposed to be romantic. These young men believed in everything, from indifference, and were not hampered by any classic formula. Nothing makes people so old as talking about their hearts: but Renaud was ill, and illness is a kind of old age. So he said to himself that this method of suppressing the heart to the advantage of the intelligence, besides being not wholly new, might get these young gentlemen into trouble later on. It is quite true that they are certain they have not long to live: everyone knows that the end of the world is coming to-morrow, but the end of the world does not necessarily mean the end of its inhabitants. . . . Unless, as was not at all improbable, these young people do but deny now so as to be able to affirm later on, and having shouted their disgust, will fling themselves upon experience in a mad thirst for enjoyment. It was very natural, though the will is a serious fault—in others. Jāli with his flat features, was just the opposite. He seemed full of desires, but beyond them all was a profound detachment. He must cultivate Jāli more and more.

Darkness had fallen. A murky coal fire was smoking at the end of the room. Renaud was tired. The others were all unceremoniously sitting on his bed. He was feverish: and he was seized by the terrible tearing pains of sufferers from liver. He turned to the wall and closed his eyes. He could vaguely hear Jāli answering his friends: 'Don't be inquisitive. You must not push me beyond the limits of knowledge. Let your subconscious self . . . this is bad for you. Curiosity kills.'

A week later Renaud had just been operated on. It had not been possible to take him over to France: he was in a nursing-home in Portland Place. He had waited too long: peritonitis. His condition was desperate: and he knew it. The Prince was there. Jāli felt as if the boat that carried him was sinking and he could not survive. Like all primitive beings, he knew Death was behind that door even before she had knocked.

Renaud kept on looking at his fingers like those who have been poisoned by datura: an unmistakeable sign.

'Before you are well and about again . . .' Jāli began.

'Don't talk like that,' Renaud signed. 'I don't mind dying.'

'Nonsense,' said the nurse, 'who said anything about dying, Monsieur d'Écouen?'

'Nurses always say that. And yet hospitals haven't much to do with health. Besides I was wrong to take my old name when I came in here. I ought to have known that the Cohens never die and the d'Écouens always do.' He smiled. Pride prevented him admitting his terror, or crying out that he was in the West, on firm ground, and that he did not want to disappear at any cost, although he had often repeated with his lips that there was only an imperceptible transition from life into death. It was true that when he was well, he had sometimes said, 'I don't want to live to be old,' but never 'I want to die young.'

'I shan't confess,' thought Renaud. 'I will not recant anything. Besides I have spent my life confessing, either in public or to myself. That should be enough. And how can I admit that everything attracts me, good as well as evil? Death has overtaken and seized me, at the height of my life and my understanding. Is it my turn? Death follows the fashion, she refuses to grow old, and confines her attentions to young people.'

He thought of his friends, Raymond Radiguet and Emmanuel Fay.

'She will have no more to do with pale faces: she wants the finest young men, ripe and sweet like fruit. . . . War has got her into bad habits. . . . Besides I'm going to live. . . . One more bad night. . . . I'm sure I shall feel different to-morrow.'

'I hope so,' said Jāli.

But at bottom he remained an Oriental: in such supreme moments his heart could take no part. When anyone drowns himself at Karastra, everyone runs to the river, but no one jumps into the water. It is a matter between a man and his own demons. Besides what seemed to him astonishing was not death, but the achievement of living. There is the miracle. When one thinks of all the efforts of nature to this end, of all those who have disappeared while trying not to go, how can one fail to be astonished at this brief miracle of existence?

'I can't bear to think of what I am leaving behind me,' Renaud went on: 'all the women that I have not known, all the books I have not had time to read, all the countries I still have never seen, so many wines that I have never tasted!' (He said, 'I had so many things to do,' just as others say, 'What a nuisance! I can never get everything done before the train goes.') 'I always wanted to die smiling. But I can't, even when, as now, I am not in pain and can rest. One must be old to do that. When one has done everything it is so easy to say goodbye.'

'I am sure you will get well,' Jāli began. 'And you will find it very useful to have passed so near annihilation, as we used to do in the Bugatti. It helps one to get rid of one's passions early. . . .'

'But I don't want to get rid of them now,' cried Renaud. 'I have lost too much time trying to understand them. Now I want to live in them. Everything else is a voyage to the moon. So many risks to travel to a dead star! I hate transparencies, vapours and illusions. Down with phantoms!'

He sank back exhausted.

'. . . In fact, as early as is possible, Renaud,' Jāli went on, still in pursuit of his idea, and shocked at the agony of an Occidental, riveted to life and the external world, by hasps of steel which resist and only loosen gradually one by one, and after frightful suffering. He had never understood that a white may indeed be a superior being, but is never superior to life, because he believes in it.

Jāli, a figure of bronze, gilded by the lamplight, said no more. But his motionless form was so flat, so impervious to any external perception, that Renaud's vision came to rest upon it. At first Renaud took pleasure in contemplating it—he thought it made his temperature go down—but gradually, the spectacle began to deaden his senses: this face from Asia soothed him too much, drew him towards annihilation, and sapped his strength. His spirit still protested, though his weakening body, ready for surrender, made no resistance. Jāli's presence was rather like that of a cat, so peaceful that to look at it makes one want to go to sleep. Renaud felt that if he gave way to sleep now, he would not wake again.

'Peace!' he cried. 'No, not at any price!'

He grew agitated, and began to tremble: the nurse came in. She was blonde, with green eyes, and made up in the modern manner, not unlike those ravishing creatures who work the lifts at Selfridge's.

'Nurse,' cried Renaud, overjoyed at this white apparition that lit up the room (he called to her gently 'nurse,' like Juliet).

He would confide in her only, a white face like his own.

'I must be alone, nurse. Tell my mother and my uncle to come. . . . But send that black face away . . . don't let him come in again . . . he's not my friend: he's not my friend, he's the devil. The devil is black, like sleep. He doesn't worry you, he comforts you and sends you to sleep . . . the Equator—that's where you can't breathe, because Hell is just underneath.'

Jāli went out.

When he came back the next day, very early—indeed, it was hardly daylight, and the sirens of the factories were rending the dawn like an industrial angelus—he was told that Renaud had ceased to live. The nurse added that he had struggled all night.

. . . .

Jāli thought of the legend of the two friends who were studying together the doctrine of the Perfect One : ‘ He who first obtains deliverance, will let the other know at once.’ He waited. He stood in the room listening to the noise of the rain. Not a sign. The sadness of these Western winters, these fogs, and artificial light in the daytime. Not one naked peasant, not one blinding ricefield. . . . (However he was here at least out of reach of noise, that curse of the West.) No invisible presence. Renaud had gone for ever. He was dead ! What a conjuring trick it was, every time as surprising as the last—this passage from life to death, although it was no more than a trivial adventure, in the course of which we lose no more than our corpses, just as the snake leaves his skins upon the trees. Jāli remembered how Indra, King of the Gods, saluted, with the imperturbability of a professor of organic chemistry, the entrance of the Saint into Nirvana: 'In truth, all composite bodies are impermanent: it is their nature to form and to dissolve; they only come into existence to perish.'

Renaud's room was empty: that room of his with the round bath-tub, his trunks, and the washing which the washerwoman went on bringing, and lay in an accumulating pile on the sofa, just as letters went on coming to his address. He looked no more than twenty as he lay on his bed in the nursing-home. . . . It was the fire in his eyes, the deliberately set lips like those of a boxer about to strike, that gave him weight and age. . . . So flat under the sheet . . . 'the corpse with hollow sides' of which the son of the Sakyas spoke, the first time he met with death.

Surrounded by his servants, Jāli remained alone all day in his room, wrapped in a fur coat. His heart was heavy. He would leave college. The fog made him cough. How he had loved his French brother! He who had saved him, rescued him, and taught him, not through books, but by word of mouth, as one must do with Orientals. He could see once more the first evening of his liberty, under the hood of the white Bugatti. . . . Jāli had not understood Renaud's tragic end, he had seen nothing of the ultimate blasphemies, the final horror, that frightful shuddering before the abyss, and thought of his friend with a quite unclouded sorrow. It is true that he respected the medical science of the white men, but what atavism was it that whispered to him that if some panther's whiskers and powdered stag's horn had been placed on Renaud's stomach, his friend would still be alive? Now, what was he to do? How helpless he felt, so abruptly deserted in this vast solitude of Western crowds! Renaud's disappearance passed quite unnoticed. The Comtesse d'Écouen did not come: no relation and no friend. Asia meditates on death and awaits it with firmness, often thinking of it: when Death comes, much is made of him, the poorest have their funeral ceremonies: his guerdon is tears, and symbols go before him. Here who ever talks about such things? And as for English mourning! It is not even politeness that makes people refrain from making a parade of their grief. No: in Europe the dead disappear through a trap door and in a few minutes they are forgotten. They leave the Western lands furtively, in darkness, just as, in palaces, the coffins are brought out at night, through the servants' quarters. There was something prodigious about the sleight of hand involved in the disposal of the ten million corpses of the war: anywhere else this open sore could not have been healed for centuries. Here, in a few years, not a trace is visible. . . . And once more Jāli understood that the East had no choice . . . either to be drunk with life, or not.

Soon, time was forgotten. Jāli succeeded in sinking more and more quickly, as was his desire, into silence. He got some sacred texts from the School of Oriental Languages in Finsbury Circus: and he meditated. Through his window he could see the corner of a park, splendid, princely, full of deer, quite an Indian landscape: the son of the Sakyas often called such a scene to mind. . . .

Suddenly, an idea struck Jāli: Buddha's youth was very like his own! The Sacred writings might be an account of his own life. What a singular analogy! He too was a Prince, a young exquisite, proud of his wealth and his beauty. Karastra, like Kapilavastou, the capital of the Sakyas, was a small aristicratic principality. And King Indra's wealth came from rice, like that of Buddha's father: as he read the description of the three palaces 'whose stables were too small for the horses and the elephants,' Jāli felt he might have been at home. Like Buddha, the Crown Prince had run away, thrusting aside his father and his family, and he too left his women. . . . This suffocation in too narrow a scope, the satiety of pleasure, the restlessness, the impossibility of finding satisfaction in earthly enjoyment, the growing desire for noble aims, all the salient points in Buddha's life up to his escape from his father's palace, was it not the very life of Jāli himself, during these last few months?

The more he concentrated his thought on the subject, the Prince found still deeper similarities. He remembered the conversations of the young Sakyamouni with his coachman, or rather with him who was at once his coachman, his groom, his confidant, and his friend; thanks to whom he was to abandon the artificial world in which his father had confined him. Every time when Buddha's carriage stopped to encounter some new story in the edifice of human misery, when he met an old man, a sick man, or a dead man, it was to his coachman that the son of the Sakyas turned for information: he alone hid nothing from his master, and the shock of the truth was such that the young man decided to abandon everything. But had not Jāli had such a coachman as Kanthaka at his side? Was it not Renaud, employed as his chauffeur, by a series of hazards in which it was impossible not to see the hand of destiny? Renaud, beside him out there on the low seat of the Bugatti, that fiery and beloved car which seemed to have a soul, and which he had left at the frontier with as many regrets as the Perfect One abandoned his faithful horse, after galloping all night to shake off the pursuing guards, and professor of organic chemistry, the entrance of the Saint into Nirvana: 'In truth, all composite bodies are impermanent: it is their nature to form and to dissolve; they only come into existence to perish.'

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Two nights later, the image of King Rama II, his grandfather, appeared to him in a dream. Jāli had known him in his boyhood. This emaciated monarch had been called the Monk-King, for he had gone into complete seclusion for fifteen years, in the middle of his reign, after some youthful folly. Physically and morally—Jāli resembled him, and his astrologers had often predicted a similar destiny for him. This plunged him into even deeper meditation. Cambridge, in this connection, might well be considered a dark and dismal cloister where Jāli bent in solitude over the Western world as over the body of a dying man. London in those early days . . . Angèle, the French girl . . . there too, fate had willed that he, like Buddha, should find favour in the eyes of a woman of the lowest caste.

When he thought over all this, these last months of his life, and, further back, his life at Karastra, he felt stir within him once again that holy impulse which had obliged him to leave the kingdom. Yes, some one had given him an order; an order not to stop, but to go on once more. Let the experience continue, therefore: he will go forward, since he must. The industrial disturbances, the violence of social relations, the purposeless victories of the great European cities, appeal to him no longer as anything more than temporary difficulties demanding solution, misunderstandings to be explained, more apparent than real, contradictions to the teaching of the Perfect One. At the base of suffering is desire: at the base of Western societies is need. Not to allow need to become desire, or pain: to reduce and simplify this desire, explain it, so as to set others free and make them less unhappy, there lay his duty. This pure spirit of the sages of Vedic India, and China of yesterday, still exists, and Jāli felt it flowing in his veins: this time it shall not be said that Asia will shut herself up in egotistical meditation and give no answer and refuse assistance. He would give an example, an example to the East itself. The body of the Universe is Europe: if Asia, hitherto its soul, its essential counterpoise, sacrifices herself to matter, then the balance will be upset and the world destroyed. Maîtreya, the next Buddha, with his thirty-two distinctive signs, his eighty secondary indications, and his two hundred and sixteen marks of good omen, accounced by Sakyamouni himself, is still in process of being born, through thousands of transmigrations, and there are nearly eighty thousand years to wait before his coming. In the interval, what will become of the world? At this moment all the joints of the worn-out mechanism are getting hot: oil must be applied as soon as possible to make it work smoothly and without jarring. Everything must be done to gain time, to sign an armistice with evil.

An agreeable feeling of resolution slipped into Jāli's mind: he recovered all the confidence with which he had started his journey, two months ago. He compared the two moments: how much less weak he was to-day, less diffident, in spite of his loneliness! There would be no question of fasting, ritual or almsgiving: it was himself that he would give, his time, his heart, his life. 'Acts, action' these are the words so constantly in the mouth of Buddha, that great realist. 'You will be judged by your acts.' Jāli's whole heart and mind were in this sacred expedition, this holy war. To beat down vice, put passions in chains, destroy corruption, strike them all to the earth. Smite them with the truth, without Puritanical rigidity, or Messianic delusion: make pain bankrupt, and reduce evil to ruin.

And, all this, alone!

If Renaud had been there . . . but Renaud had crossed the sea. He lay somewhere in Normandy, stiff and straight in his coffin.

BOOK TWO: IV

The Minister of Karastra at London.
To H.R.H. Prince Jāli of Karastra,
Trinity College, Cambridge.

'My Lord:

In the capacity of slave to the Divinely-Inspired Master I beg most humbly to inform Your Majesty and Royal Highness, if I may venture so far to trouble the Sole-of-His-Sacred-Feet, of certain matters affecting His personal position. Never having been invited, I abstained from visiting Cambridge, and I send this letter by hand. There are certain rumours going about London at the moment relative to a serious difference between His Majesty the King and Your Royal Highness; I had even to take steps to prevent the news-agencies publishing a Calcutta telegram which mentioned a conspiracy. I know so well that all this is pure invention that I think it my duty to point out to Your Royal Highness that, without interrupting His studies at the University, it would be particularly desirable that He Himself should himself put an end to these tendencious statements, by coming to London to be present at the anniversary of the national fête of Karastra, which falls, as Your Royal Highness is aware, on the seventh night of the second moon. I shall upon this occasion give an afternoon party, to which I have invited a certain number of important personages in the political and social worlds and the Press of this country.

What is proper to be done depends entirely upon the pleasure of the Top-of-the-Head whose slave I am.'

(*signed*) RATNAVONG.

The first night of the fifth month of the twenty-eighth year of the reign of His Majesty King Indra.

No, Jāli would not go to London. Why should he cut short that bitter pleasure, the only one remaining to him, of isolation and of peace? Then, on reflection, and being a little impressed by this official letter, he changed his mind and telegraphed that he would appear on the appointed day at his Legation.

The dreary Roland Gardens were enlivened by the pale blue of the national flag of Karastra, which was accompanied, in honour of the Crown Prince, by the yellow of the Royal Standard. A crimson carpet met Jāli at the edge of the pavement, and he went into the Legation. His former aide-de-camp, Colonel Prince Souryavong, who had not followed him to Cambridge and had become Military Attaché, in attendance on the Minister, awaited him at the outer door.

Photographers and journalists. In the vestibule a row of gleaming top hats. The Diplomatic Corps is introduced with much creaking of patent leather shoes. Refreshments; green tea under the enlarged portrait of King Indra and the plan of the Port of Karastra. The Minister drew Jāli into a window-embrasure, that classic diplomatic confessional, not to show him the line of motor buses, like a bar of iron reddened in the fire, but to inform him that the King was ill and was making anxious enquiries about his son by telegram every day. The Minister's impression was that the King would forgive the Prince and was specially anxious that he should not renounce the throne. Jāli shrugged his shoulders: that indeed, was the question.

'Disgust and death are in my heart. This world is a prison. I am remote from all dynastic ambitions; I shall not reign before the Sacred Fig-tree grows in Hyde Park.'

The Minister looked at his master with consternation. He was a Westernised Asiatic, an official, scrubbed and polished by English life, a member of the Turf Club, who bought his clothes in Savile Row. He would have excused

Jāli for making an attempt upon the throne, even by the aid of force, but such words of renunciation caused him veritable pain. Slippery as one of his native dragons, he could not understand Jāli's spacious conflicts, his quarrel with the world. With an anxiety rendered more acute by his profession, he wondered how he could mitigate the effects of this independence of mind, if they were made public. But suddenly a lady came forward and slowly sank before them in a curtsey, exposing to their view a neck as round and fat as a lay brother's, and a mass of dyed hair. This exaggerated reverence obliged the Minister to present her.

Jāli, pursuing his thought, looked at her without seeing her.

'I want to walk alone in life, like the rhinoceros,' he said.

'In that case, Sir, I have chosen a very bad moment to place myself in your august path. . . . An old friend of your Dear Father. I have visited Karastra in a cruiser, but Your Royal Highness was not born. In 1895! My husband, who had retired from the Governorship of Eastern Borneo, was pursuing his studies in Pali there. . . . His Majesty was so kind as to send us a dish of mangoes every morning to our hotel. Here is my card: Mrs. Cristabel Handy, President of the *Gates of the East Society*, supposing that a young

God has any need of my services. It is to some extent a secret society . . . since its object is to do good, and good ought to be done in secret, ought it not? I am at home on Thursdays . . . would your Highness give me an evening? Then why not this evening . . . yes, late, after the theatre if you like. . . . I quite understand that a Cambridge student does not want to miss the revue at the *Palace*. I will send my car.'

Jāli did not yet know what an outlay of presence of mind, ingenuity, brutality, and nervous energy is required to refuse an invitation and discourage a professional hostess. He was caught, entangled in smiles, and felt ill at ease, while his interlocutress seemed suddenly relieved; it was because, without realising it, he had accepted her invitation for that very evening.

When Jāli arrived, rather late, at Mrs. Cristabel Handy's, the evening was nearly at an end. He found himself in a colourless Kensington mansion, which recalled an American beauty parlour, or a dubious hotel in the 'Europe' quarter, with arum lilies in jars, sticks of incense, Javanese dolls, and dusty Indian portieres, too long and pinned up at the bottom. He entered a large apartment, blazing with light, covered with nautical souvenirs and Oriental trifles. Crowded together in corners were groups of gentlemen whose character was sufficiently indicated by their neck-ties of black satin tied several times round their necks, and the fact that they consented to drink—and beer too—with hungry ashen-faced Hindoos. Fausts from Berlin, and ladies back from Benares, were sporting on the sandy waste of metaphysics which replaces golf for Germans. With the insinuating smile of a gipsy, benevolent and busy, Mrs. Cristabel Handy flew to the weak spots in her drawing-room, rushed up to groups of larvae, detached a guest and carried him to stop another leak, saying every time, 'I want to introduce an exquisite creature.' But Jāli came before them all. He was her central personage: as soon as he arrived that evening, the sham druids of Bloomsbury, the fakirs of Jermyn Street, and even the charming Wilfrid Pennis, of the School of Oriental Languages, a true savant, were pushed into the background.

Mrs. Cristabel Handy made an occasional dash into Esotericism, took in supplies in passing from the theosophists of Bedford Square, contrived a retreat for herself in the Upanishads, set various worlds rotating, inconvenienced a number of important personages, and was now composing her twenty-eighth book, *Aurora*, which was to be the continuation of a tetralogy, *Darkness and Light*. Like the Buddha, she never ceased to direct upon all men 'the strength of her goodwill.' Like a sort of social rolling pin, she tried to level the asperities of various classes and races, going round and round with the persistence of a circus horse, to raise the level of human kindness. Devoid of all restraint, and always greedy to go higher, she threw away, like ballast, her friends, her sandwiches, the memory of her husband, her exotic objects of art. In a word, this aimiable sorceress made you feel that she could do anything except let you leave her house.

Jāli remained standing and refused to sit down. He thought of Renaud, who had cried out, as he looked at all these Western faces, impervious to what is truly life:

'And to think it is such creatures as these that we must save!'

Jāli might have exclaimed in the presence of this crowd: 'To think that it is through such as these that we must come to know the West, and understand and love it: rediscover the idea of it that I had conceived in Asia! They are even more bastard descendants of the great primitive races than the Asiatics themselves.'

Mrs. Cristabel Handy leaned towards the Prince's ear. After midnight, he was afraid she would change into a wolf, according to the folk-lore of Karastra.

'Hush, the last of them is off. But please don't go yourself, Sir. Come into this little drawing room. . . . I will introduce some charming women to your Royal Highness. Between ourselves, quite a little cabal of our own.'

Jāli found himself in a low-ceilinged room, decorated in black and gold, like a Chinese chemist's shop: cushions as soft as sea water were piled up on the carpet, and in them were sunk the partly clothed forms of various ladies of the middle class, wearing necklaces from the Rue de Rivoli. They called each other by pretentious and literary Christian names, like those of Pullman cars: Portia, Seraphita, Cressida. A thick smoke curled out of the door and windows: Jāli thought the place was on fire.

'Subtle, divine poison!' cried Mrs. Cristabel Handy. 'Ah! The inventions of the East! You are the only races that truly understand pleasure. Your Royal Highness must be feeling quite at home,' she added with a confidential air. 'The flowers of evil come from the East—roses, poppies, tulips, pinks—all the finest flowers.

'What are these clouds of smoke?'

'Opium: just a little pellet, Sir, come, do.'

'I have never smoked,' answered Jāli. 'No one does at Karastra, except a few coolies.'

'Ah! How much more sensible you are,' said Mrs. Cristabel Handy, not to be defeated.

With the silent agility of the East, Jāli slipped out on to the stairs while the lady of the house turned her head. He opened one door, then another, but lost the way, for he found himself on a flat roof.

He was not accustomed to drawing rooms: the alchemy of society turned his head. Life at Karastra is domestic and solid, as it is everywhere in the East, and its expression is simple, primitive and patriarchal. Before his eyes stretched the London sky, coated with tar, and painted pink at the edges. He took a deep breath, and sat down on the roof, alone before an ocean of chimneys and the stars.

Jāli was restored by the cool air, the north-west wind that brings courage: his uneasiness of the last few days was dissipated: an amazing calm prepared him: he knew that he was about to receive an order. He was not to be a monk, a thinker, a beggar, a new *bikku*, but a Prince who would subdue the Beast: in response to the white men with their gifts of alcohol, cocaine, and commerce, Asia would, through him, retaliate with her own weapons, simplicity, patience, and the essential truths. He had always felt himself different from the common run of men of sovereign race, but not with the superiority recorded in the Almanach de Gotha: a superiority born, in these latter days, of illusions lost at last. Not a sovereign in history, even the most imperialistic of them; none that had marched under the evil standard of pride, had women to your Royal Highness. Between ourselves, quite a little cabal of our own.'

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The external world now became obliterated.

The more Jāli concentrated, he seemed to be lit up by torrents of spiritual light. His eyes were dazzled by it, but from within. The sky of London was now red, as it were from the glow of a forge. He opened his eyes after long inner contemplation. All the vertical constructions that surrounded him, the chimney pots, the diagonal safety stair-cases of pierced iron, the lines and angles of the roofs, and, beneath him, the black trenches of the streets, all seemed to converge upon him in a circle, blazing with an unendurable radiance.

Then Jāli raised his eyes, and the Buddha, the Man-God, appeared to him. His face glowed with light and beauty. Jāli recognised him by his long ears, his shining shoulders, and his hair, with its spiral curls. Far above Kensington, above the sparks of the tramways and the whistling for taxis, brooded the Origin of all peace. His fingers formed two perfect rings. Clothed in serenity as in a white garment He gazed steadily upon Jāli from beneath His long eyelids. His lips opened, but the muscles of His broad flat face did not move or become contorted, as when Occidentals are about to speak. He merely said :

'My law is a law of salvation for all men.'

He said no more, but He remained there for several minutes, and Jāli was able to contemplate Him.

The Prince prostrated himself on the dark zinc roof: he stayed thus for some while, as he used to do in the equatorial forest on the river bank before the bronze Buddha with its closed eyes.

'The time has come,' he thought, with a frozen exaltation.

When he got up he felt a man renewed. He had shed his past just as, in death, a man gets rid of his previous lives. He was awake: for he had just been born. The analogy between himself and the Perfect One was complete. The crowds in the outlying parts of the city, the human tide in Oxford Street appeared to him like the very image of those acts which, accumulated through thousands of centuries by millions of generations, do not die; like plastic, compressible matter, crushing living humanity by their infinity and reproducing themselves in endless combinations of consequences, unalterable when all is dissolved. His way was laid down; he would seek for nothing but enlightenment, the portal to the ultimate annihilation. He had a mission to fulfil. Now that all the bonds with yesterday were broken he would enter the world to bring it deliverance, reconciliation, and peace.

The night was far advanced, but none the less when Jāli got back to the house he still found lights. In the little boudoir that he had to go through once more, women were lying stretched out beneath the oily smoke. Lying at random on the floor, they slept or dreamed, with dilated pupils that could not see him. One of them, supporting herself on one elbow, stirred, over a conical lamp, a soft paste that crackled like black butter. A dull light came through the alabaster ceiling and from silver lamps: it was absorbed in the darkness except where its reflection glittered and flashed in plaques of polished mother-of-pearl. One blonde lady, with hair that frothed like beer, cried in her delirium:

'At last I can see pagodas!'

Not so long ago she had been pretty. Now, pallid, ravaged, she was slavering with open mouth. Another lying across her, ground her teeth in her sleep. Take away the jewels, dresses and ornaments, and what would remain? Vanity, the mania of pleasure, thought Jāli.

He was so appalled that he took advantage of the spectacle to strengthen his resolution. He stood and contemplated their disordered hair, sagging bosoms, and heavy mouths. He thought of the son of the Sakyas when he, on his last night, at an hour like this, looked at his bed once more, addressed a discourse to it and renounced the pleasures of the senses. It is the moment when women themselves are to be given up: the Buddha left them sleeping among the musical instruments strewn about the floor, disgusted by their abandoned attitudes, their upturned eyes, and went out on tiptoe, while an antelope, the only creature awake, which one of the concubines was holding against her bosom, was eating the roses on a garland. Like the Master, Jāli cried out:

'Dead! Dead! I am in a cemetery,' and went downstairs. Below, the butler still in his usual clothes, distant and impenetrable, handed him his overcoat.

Jāli went through the streets on foot.

The sun of suns had risen for him.

BOOK
III
ENLIGHTENMENT

BOOK THREE : I

By the headlines, '*Cambridge Romance : astonishing adventure in the hunting field : fight between undergraduates,*' England learnt that a fox which was being hunted not far from Cambridge, had taken refuge in the city. The animal was chased across the grounds of Trinity College and had entered a butcher's shop. It was stated that a few minutes later it had been bought, still living, by a coloured student, Prince Jāli, son of the King of Karastra, who took the beast home and housed it in the small garden behind his house. The *Badminton*, the hunt presided over by Sir Komitas Tartarbouroun, a rich Armenian who had become a naturalised Englishman, with hounds, huntsmen, and numerous undergraduates who were following the hunt, had entered Cambridge in pursuit of the fox : the Prince had been asked, first politely, then peremptorily, to give up the animal alive : he had refused (although they politely offered him a pad) on account of his Buddhist principles.

'He who kills, spoils and wastes,' he had replied, quoting the Buddha. Just as he was about to be roughly handled by the huntsmen, some other students, one of whom was Irish and the other American, had taken the Prince's part and told Sir Komitas Tartarbouroun that it was not so long since he himself had been hunted by the Turks. Explosion! The police had to be called in to separate the combatants. The fox had been placed under seal. The English papers devoted long articles to the affair. As far back as 1637 a hare had hidden in a church. The Hunt Club interested itself in the matter: the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals took it up: and certain persons wrote to the *Times* to protest. The Prince, on being questioned by the Proctors, appealed to precedent, and explained that the Buddha had come upon a wounded swan and refused to give it up to the huntsmen. He added that he despised sports, which were nothing more than the revenge of manual labour on the idle, a statement which prejudiced against him the Court of Honour that had been summoned to consider the matter. Public interest was transferred from the fox to the Prince. The Socialist papers spoke of him with favour: G. B. Shaw made a brief utterance. Jāli became acquainted with fame, photographic apparatus, and the fumes of magnesium—the modern form of incense. According to some, the Prince was a visionary, a kind of mystic, and more than a little eccentric. The lesser journals gave many piquant details: a few days before, Jāli had given away enormous sums in the street. He must certainly regard himself as Buddha: instead of india-rubber discs, he had luminous plates affixed to the soles of his boots. On being summoned by the Vice-Chancellor, this wealthy student had appeared in rags: and in reply to an observation on the matter, he declared he had changed clothes with a poor man, 'because attractive garments originated in physical desire.'

In short, the situation had become so acute that it was stated that the Prince was about to leave Cambridge for the time being.

These adventures did, in fact, have a decisive influence on Jāli's life. He exaggerated their importance, and, left to himself as he was, with no one to straighten the affair out for him, he was precipitated into action. Taken at a disadvantage, he plunged into excesses which he would otherwise have avoided. The press articles, the congratulatory addresses, the telegrams in which country squires of advanced age announced that they were coming to pull his nose, the disapproval of the better class of undergraduate, everything contributed to make him emerge from the passive attitude that he had preserved since his revelation. He ceased to contemplate the world with the lofty glance of the sage. He cut off his beautiful dark hair, upon recognising the fifteen troubles it brings with it;—'brushing, braiding, washing, garlands, perfume, fumigation, dyes, yellow myrobolan, emblic myrobolan, ribbons, combing, cutting, thinning, vermin, and last of all the fall of the hair, which drives men to such despair that they tear their breasts and lose their senses.' Is not the Buddha right when he says that a man so hemmed in by these fifteen troubles, loses the taste for the delicacies of philosophy?

Thenceforward Jāli smiled when he thought of his past life. He lived alone in London, at Hampstead. He would be a sage, in the Indian tradition, that is, a rich man who gives up everything, and not a barbarous proletarian, like the Christian Apostles. He had sent back his servants to Karastra, with his jewels: like the Buddha who blushed with shame to see himself adorned and sent his back to the Maharajah Suddhana, his father. But Jāli managed to convey two pearl necklaces to Angèle, the French girl of the Commercial Road. Nearly every day he went down to the library of the School of Oriental Languages. Finsbury Circus forms a calm pool in the centre of the City, all blue and pink. At one end of it stands the School, a Greek temple of the eighteenth century, coloured like a pipe. The grass, within the circular railings of the square, edged with early tulips, suggests a Rhodian dish. Around this reservoir of the wisdom and science of Asia, rise vast monuments influenced by the architecture of Wall Street, fortresses of Foreign Trading Companies, *Burmah Oil*, *River Plate*, *etc.* The West of scholarship beside the West of trade. Is not one as good as the other, Jāli asked himself whimsically from time to time? These same white men who excavate harbours, pierce mountains, make the jungle retreat, are they not the same as those who have plied their victorious thought in the secrets of hieroglyphs, reconstructed Indian philology, and thrust back the origin of the world by many thousand years? Everything was pervaded by this relentless, systematic energy, this dazzling and irritating culture—he could not call it intelligence, because it dealt only in the external, whereas, for an Oriental, intelligence is always focussed inwards. Henceforward, Jāli strove to dismiss from his mind all feelings of envy; he thought only of how to save the soul of this too lovely lady Europa, who was lingering at the ball, brilliant and detested, not knowing that she was sick unto death.

Jāli had been pursued since his photograph had appeared in the papers by Mrs. Cristabel

Handy, who had got upon his tracks once more; and he no longer evaded the invitations of the *Gates of the East Society* since he had made up his mind to become a public character. 'My faith is a law of salvation for all men'—these had been the words of He-Who-Knows, spoken across the London roofs.

The headquarters of the *Gates of the East Society* was in the Edgware Road. Jāli could see the house from some distance away: it was a kind of Byzantine church, built in brick with a cupola crowned by six minarets; the interior was like an American bank, with mahogany desks, mirrors, and steel racks for papers. *Be zealous for the Work* was inscribed in gilded bronze above the amphitheatre.

Jāli shuddered when he saw, posted at the door as if for a concert, notices in large letters:

FESTIVAL OF JĀLI OF KARASTRA
COME AND HEAR HIM WHO HAS AWAKENED

The audience was smaller than he had expected, and less enthusiastic. Mrs. Cristabel Handy was as vigorous a propagandist as ever. She came up to him with an armful of flowers and hung a garland of tuberoses round Jāli's neck. She was a little taken aback when she noticed that he had had his head shaved like a convict, then she recovered herself and said:

'Your Highness, I have collected all the active forces in Buddhism now to be found in London. You are greatly admired. The story of the fox is sublime. Do say a word—just one word.'

Jāli saw before him rows of decayed, scorbutic creatures, under-nourished old maids who take Maeterlinck for a thinker, flat-footed clerks who called him Brother, Leader, and Lamp of the Law. There were also several Antichrists from the suburbs, some occultists, conscientious objectors with pince-nez on a chain and sandals, who in times of war prefer to receive blows than to give them. A tall Scot in national costume, with red hair, pallid from the low atmospheric pressure of Ceylon, where he had lived for ten years as *bikku* in a monastery, greeted Jāli in the name of the Scottish Branch. On his shoulder was the yellow scarf of the monks instead of the Highland plaid. He was a former managing engineer on the South Indian Railways; mosquitoes had drained all the colour from his face, which was now as pale as tallow. There were also the secretary and assistant secretary of the Welsh Branch, who were having an affair with each other, and were proceeding upon an exotic and spiritual honeymoon towards the religion of renunciation. There were theosophists, suspicious and envious of all Gods: and devotees of table-turning, amateurs of haunted houses, married priests, healers, and hypnotists.

Mrs. Cristabel Handy, who was also hung with garlands, but, from motives of economy, they were in her case made of paper, did her utmost to induce Jāli to make a speech: but he tried to get out of it. At last the Scotsman picked him up in his arms like a child, and planted him in the middle of the amphitheatre. Jāli looked about him at all these poor people, who, without exception, bore the mark of failure, the stigmata of insomnia, the emblems of ill-luck; he saw in their disinherited eyes, broken careers, hunger, and domestic horrors. Life is certainly full enough of renunciation for them. It is indeed such people that create religions.

He then said a few words, only a few, for speaking seemed to weaken his purpose.

'We are at a turning of the ways, O Hearts of Excellence and Brothers in Holiness . . . the need, after the rout of the materialism of the nineteenth century of a new philosophy and a new religion. Was there one more modern, more adaptable, more devoid of prejudice, than Buddhism? Do not say 'Buddha is all very well for India.' Buddhism, like Catholicism, won its greatest successes outside its country of origin.'

Polite, but unenthusiastic approbation from the audience.

'It is no longer a question of recruiting a few disciples in Orientalising circles, among retired Colonial officials and tourists, as has been the aim of your societies hitherto. You must get hold of the masses, arouse them and explain to them this simple faith, which has no ulterior political motive, no clergy, and no supernatural apparatus. . . .'

The audience, of which the majority were English Buddhists, gentle lunatics who eat lotus-salad, nervous and diffident of all demonstrations involving the infringement of the liberty of their neighbour and other British tabus, regarded Jāli with consternation, but a handful of 'blue' sojourners from other lands and green intellectuals began to applaud with violence.

'Quite right! Exactly what we think!'

'We must get hold of the people!'

'Agitate in the streets!'

'Preach in Hyde Park.'

They fell upon Jāli.

Mrs. Cristabel Handy, to try and make matters clear, cried:

'My Lord . . .'

'Do not call me 'My Lord' any more, madam.'

'Then let me call you 'Lord.''

Then, proceeding with this exalted symbolism.

'And now, Lord, we must find you some disciples. Let me introduce Dr. Primus Kayser, *Oberpräsidialrat*, a high official of the old régime in Prussia: he is a genuine *bikku*, does not recognise Sunday, makes his own bed, does his own washing up, cleans his lamp, and teaches physics. His calculations on the subject of concave mirrors are authoritative: he has translated the *Tevigga-Sutta*.'

Jāli observed in front of him a vast polygonal object with scarred and patched cheeks, shark's teeth, and a countenance after the manner of the art of New Guinea. Dr. Primus Kayser, Director of one of the German Buddhist reviews, bowed as though he had been mounted on springs.

'Brother,' he began; 'Schopenhauer said that the Asiatic Powers would one day claim by treaty the right to flood Europe with Buddhist missionaries. That day has come for you. But, believe me, you will waste your time in this country: everyone is either cowardly or indifferent. Imagine what Asia means, not merely for our governing classes, who look to it for the origins of their political miscalculations, but for the lower middle class in Germany, the refuge of romanticism. A man who has been in Asia? Why in Germany he is looked on as Alexander, Marco Polo, or Jesus. The women are at his feet. And if the man should be Asia in essence, a king—yourself in fact! Come to Germany. Come and take part in our magnificent Buddhist renaissance. Three flourishing reviews: and in one year two thousand five hundred books published at Leipzig, all on Buddhism. Come and see our pagoda, near Berlin: enormous congregations! How can you expect the English to understand a religion of enlightened reason and analysis, and with so lofty and stoical a morality? We alone, who invented the subconscious, can understand the East—the 'unconscious of the Universe.' In the ocean of incantations and magic, above the dark river of coffee-grounds in which Germany of the times of inflation tried to read her obscure destiny, above the fatuous optimism of Keyserling, above the Anthroposodites who guaranteed Moltke that notable success of his at the Marne, there is your Buddha. We must go to the banks of the Ganges to dig up the concepts of German philosophy, just as Schopenhauer and Houston Chamberlain looked for the origins of the old Nordic cults in Vedic times. I have the honour —*sehr geehrter Herr*—to wish you good-day.'

After this, it was the turn of Mr. Joshua Potaschmann of the City, a positive metronome of the rise and fall of the Exchange, in charge of the Eastern propaganda of the Soviet in the British Empire, formerly head of the Blasphemy

Section in the Ministry of Public Instruction, in the U.R.S.S. not so much the eye of Moscow, as its iris, its optic nerve. He was fat to the point of bursting out of his clothes, impulsive, warm-hearted, energetic. A fountain pen protruded from his pocket: he always looked as if he was ready to book an order.

'And may I ask, Brother,' he said, 'what you are after: what is your purpose?'

'To unburden the hearts of the West from all that has tormented them hitherto. I would like to be called, as King Asoka was: the 'Man without Sorrow.'

'And you think you will make any money in these damnable countries?'

'My efforts are aimed at acquitting myself of my debt to my fellow creatures,' replied Jāli, haughtily.

'It is indeed shocking to see so much noble activity wasted: noble, truly noble! Would you like to work with us for the good of humanity? Don't you belong to those mysterious regions which are described in the Bible as exporting peacocks, sandalwood, ivory and apes? We will send you raw material in exchange for all that: we go in for the mass production of hatred.'

He consulted a note-book.

His lips seemed naturally to form the syllables of the word corruption: and through them one could catch sight of his jaw, flecked with gold, like the Kremlin. 'Karastra? No entry. No plan of action in 1925. What could I have been thinking of? What about October? Are you, too, victims of Imperialism? East and West, West and East, you keep on turning over the two sides of the problem, all to no purpose: you want a World Solution. Do you know Moscow? No? I'm not a Bolshevik: I'm a disinterested but fair-minded outsider. Now I have considered the problem in all its aspects: and the World Solution must come from Moscow. Europe, you know as well as I do, is a back number!'

'But is not Bolshevism in Asia the consequence of Russian Imperialism?' asked Jāli.

'A gross error, my dear boy. It is a spiritual activity, pure and simple. It is more intensified in the East because the West gives us a little less to take hold of. It will be easier than you think. It is not a question of setting up something ready-made, cemented together, like a Colonial Empire; what we have to do is to go on manufacturing explosives blindly so as completely to dislodge the original cell, the Arian element....'

'And then?'

'Then our hour will have come, yours and mine.'

'I am for the Spirit,' Jāli answered. 'Are you not Marxists, burdened with materialism, historic and otherwise? You speak of the suppression of caste: what about your eighteen classes of officials? I am the son of a King: my message is the message of a King's son. I speak, like Buddha, to aristocrats, to my equals.'

'We are your equals: we are everything you like, and against everything that is not ourselves. 'Democracy,' as Keyserling said, 'is a temporary gymnasium which serves to develop new and more legitimate aristocracies.' That's talking sense. If you want to find what ours will be like, once the world is levelled, read Isaiah.'

Mr. Potaschmann had somehow endued his bony countenance with benevolent curves, in the Anglo-Saxon manner. He reminded one of that frightful object: a fat police-dog. When he went back on leave to what was once Russia his face resumed its normal wolf-like appearance in the train, after Berlin. Besides, having grown rich and respectable, he only engaged in political warfare to justify himself in living abroad, and was seriously thinking of becoming a naturalised Canadian.

Over against this living symbol of the material, this creature whose nose was all awry from getting it caught in doors, whose eyes were crooked from always peering into corners, whose ears were monstrous from trying to hear what should not be spoken, Jāli stood, a tall, handsome, quiet figure.

'Yes, I know,' he said, remembering a phrase often quoted by Renaud. 'We shall reach the West through the East'; that is genuine Lenin, isn't it? Poor wretch, whose fate is to belong nowhere! Your frenzy, madness, do not belong to Asia: your inconsistency, your vaporous dreams do not belong to Europe.'

'You must take our propaganda course,' went on Mr. Potaschmann, not in the least discouraged. 'I'll put you in the way of it. . . . Look in at my office one morning in the City.'

'The City,' said Jali: 'I have no business there.'

'But for your work? You must not despise the City.'

'Buddha forbids us to touch gold with our fingers,' said Jāli, haughtily.

Mr. Potaschmann dug him in the ribs.

'Oh yes, I dare say!' he said. 'You come to 3 Fleet Street. We'll fix it all up: I'll write you a cheque.'

'Don't look at me like that. I'm not a cinema star, or a champion heavy weight. Listen to me. I do not offer myself as an example. I speak in the name of Him who first taught love. Some of you have no doubt heard His name: He is called Buddha. It was He who made the world take the longest moral step forward that history has ever recorded. Where was the progress? In this: He said that acts follow their authors, as a shadow follows a man. . . .'

The scene was at Marble Arch, in Hyde Park, near those public swards, rather like the dismal herbage of the Paris fortifications. Old ladies in limousines, with bonnets rivalling those of buried Queens, were going back to Belgravia for tea. The shops were shutting. The workers were in retreat. Jāli was standing in a Ford car drawn up by the pavement. Above the spare wheel was fixed a strip of calico on which was the following legend in red cursive characters:

AVOID DEATH!
HOW?

'If I refuse to 'play the game'—polo and the rest of them—if I have had to leave Trinity College, Cambridge, if I have made a scandal at Buckingham Palace as Buddha made a scandal among the Brahmins, that is because I have some urgent truths to tell you who are listening to me.

You are more ready to stop here than in front of those other orators standing on their chairs, because you have seen my photograph in the papers, because you know I am a Prince and the son of a King. You are quite right. These truths of to-day, of 1925, and of the centuries before Christ, were made known to the world by the efforts of one man: the Buddha! At one blow he solved spiritual problems as well as social questions, yes, your questions too, the ones that you read about in your newspaper. He was for the man in the street long before there were any streets. He was the leader of Puritans and of Kings. Pacifist before your Quakers and your League of Nations; when Wilson died I fancy he had not the right to six earthquakes.'

Around Jāli, like a large colourless sheet of water, stood a crowd of vagrant women, unemployed, soldiers, beggars, sheep, a negro dismissed from a jazz band for theft, mercenary ladies in plumed hats waiting for the mist to come up before distributing themselves over the grass with male companions. As the Prince spoke, he did not allow any sign of emotion to disturb his handsome face, and his slim and haughty figure. He tried hard to find concise formulae, something that would make good publicity:

'The Buddha is like the stars; you cannot see them by daylight, but they exist. . . .'

'The Buddha is the locomotive that will drag your sins for you.'

But the orator did not speak distinctly; he did not know how to be commanding and direct. His audience looked at him but did not listen. His manner was unfortunate, for he spoke to English people as he had seen missionaries do in his own country when preaching to the natives. For several evenings he had spoken in vain. These people were tired at the end of the day and stared at him dully; they only wanted to be amused; if they are not at a cinema that evening or a boxing match, it is because they have no money: how is it possible to explain to them with the gestures and movements of an orator, among this bewildering confusion of lights, in this stream of vehicles across which a few travellers manage to ford their way, the melancholy abysses of Nirvana? Jāli aims and fires too high.

'What other religion makes such allowance for human weaknesses at a time when our humanity is nothing but weakness?'

A tall rosy youth, a Shropshire lad, with Northern eyes, and the brown froth of stout in his moustache shouted:

'You are forgetting Christ, Sir.'

'The Buddha, I tell you, succeeded where Christ failed—yes, failed. I repeat it. Christ is the spirit of revolt, the embodiment of Messianic intolerance. The Buddha has no acquaintance with anger. He knows, and the world is ignorant. Ignorance is a stain that is seen before any other. That is only just.'

'Just! What is justice?'

'That which brings peace.'

'Christ also knew how to bring peace.'

'Not without referring to his Father, and his Father was still Jehovah, a cruel and revengeful judge. Christ was a true son of his Father. The Buddha did not create, he is responsible for nothing. The Buddha never judges, but he understands and explains.'

In the bronze-coloured dusk, polished by the wind, shreds of phrases broke in upon Jāli's harangue. New hatreds were suggested and new religions proposed. The phrases, 'Colonial oppression,' 'strikes,' 'social revolution,' 'temperance,' 'return to the land,' were heard through the celestial music of a portable harmonium.

A Non-conformist in a celluloid collar and frock coat stopped and said in a tone of disgust to some women who were listening:

'His Buddha is a pagan who confuses men and animals; the fellow is mad, why are you listening to him?'

They considered for a moment, softly hesitant.

' He has a nice voice,' said one of them.

It was in vain that Jāli lavished his similes upon them.

' You are living in a house on fire and you don't care ! ' The fanfare of the Salvation Army, with hymns borne up by trombones, burst forth, and collected the stray listeners under its gleaming yellow tent: the crowd listening to Jāli dispersed. They were perfectly satisfied with their imprisonment: not one of them wanted to escape. Everyone to his own taste, in other words, all to the same one. The spirit of comradeship *versus* the spirit alone. Only a few curious shadows are left watching him struggle to express himself. He felt on the verge of a nervous collapse, and wanted to burst into tears. He was no better than a coolie out of work, a brutalised ' boy.' His apostolate was a black oven.

Suddenly, another flattened nose emerged above the calico ensign. This brigand had been asleep in the car. He looked like the people of Fo-Kien, who sell bags of roasted rice at Karastra. His face was bloated, vacant, and livid. He was a Chinese half-caste, London Secretary of the *Yellow Union*, organ of the Liberation of the Races. It was he who had lent Jāli the Ford, thinking to utilise this neophyte for active politics. Now he realised that Jāli was no use.

None the less, he was proud of going about with a Prince.

They stopped before a Russian restaurant in Greek Street, where some singular messes are provided, and they sat down at a table already occupied by an American negro. It was Franklin Sill, one of the Apostles of African emancipation, the actual author of the brilliant coup of introducing, at New Orleans and in the Southern States, among the black Catholics, the idea of a black God and a white Devil. He had come to London to collect funds. He wiped and then polished his plate, laying his chewing gum across his knife. Just as the African sun beats upon the colonist's head, so the northern fogs had confused this nigger's brain, completing what gin had begun. He blustered before Jāli, and, after glancing round hurriedly to make sure there was no Yankee anywhere ready to have him removed, he puffed himself out in his red tie, belched, and plunged into politics, that paradise of the half caste.

'Wilson thought of everybody, Brothers, but what did he do for the negro, the proletariat of the world? The missionaries teach that there is only one God, then why are there two classes of restaurants?' His eyes glittered with the joy and expectation of the great negro night, when a Voodoo shall be held in the Ritz, the whites put to torture at last. . . . Putting on a brown bowler-hat, he invited Jāli and the Chinaman to follow him to a neighbouring bar in Oxford Street, where he had an appointment after the theatre with a Mexican, a descendant of the last Aztec Emperor who fell a victim to the Spaniards. Potaschmann was to be there, after the *Palace*, and would pay for champagne: Potaschmann, who always happened to be on the spot, ready for a glass or two, with his Rolls-Royce full of tracts by Trotsky;—'England's Destiny.'

These specimens of coloured races, brought together by chance in the depths of Greek Street, clustered round this dirty table-cloth, like an allegory: they recalled the reproductions of heads of savages inset in the corners of old-fashioned maps. Restless conspiracies against the elder brother, the white man, by these disinherited juniors, lurking in his very house, and longing to destroy what stands in their way. The brutalities of Portuguese slave-traders, the tortures of the Conquistadors, who stole the emeralds of Colombia, and branded the eagle of Charles V with red-hot irons on the shoulders of the Indian miners, the massacres of the Crusades, the exactions of the Falkland Island pirates in their search for treasure, the broadsides of the English opium dealers, the knaveries of the Ionian merchants, trading in debased gold,—

all this past that seemed forgotten, rises up after centuries to bear witness against the whites, and a reckoning is demanded from their descendants, at a moment when they appear weakened, divided, and disheartened.

The company stayed for a long time, smoking and drinking; what was Jāli, palest of them all, doing among that collection of outlaws and bastards? His face seemed so distinguished, responsive, and vivid compared with those of his companions, mere masks of cement or painted wood. The immobility of his features was of a higher order than theirs: it was the result of an effort of will, a sense of dignity. Armed revolt? Is that the only way? All methods seemed to him equally impracticable. He took his leave, went back home alone and reflected. He had overtaxed his strength: he had not a tribune's lungs, an agitator's courage. There was no hatred in his heart, and his faith was more in the nature of a mystical coma, a self-regarding ecstasy, than an active contact between himself and the mob. All he could find within him was goodwill, a longing to get people to agree with him. He was very fond of a statement of Tagore that Renaud had constantly quoted to him: 'It is spiritual suicide to cut off our minds from those of the West. The present age could only have come into being because the West had a great mission to mankind. We of the East must all learn from it.' Alas, the vastness of international misunderstandings discouraged him. He made up his mind to concentrate. No more appeals. He would hold his peace, live for himself alone, learn, and, whatever happened, try—and this is most important for a high-caste Asiatic—not to lose his serenity.

Some notices posted outside Victoria Station seemed to suggest a new direction: *The Shortest route to Paris.* The French, a subtle people, and according to Renaud—except when he was in a rage—an intelligent people—would doubtless understand better that dumb eloquence of example which was to be his policy henceforward. . . . Besides, a disciple of Buddha should be always on the march. The rainy season would soon be over and the time for travelling was at hand. If he had not thought of it before, it was because the seasons in the West are not easily distinguishable. Thenceforward, six times a day and six times a night, Jāli would apply himself in solitude to the contemplation of the world, and to earning his salvation.

BOOK THREE : II

THOMAS SHANNON and Hamilton Kent stopped at Pont de l'Arche, on the banks of the Seine. Their careless loose clothes betrayed them as students of a great English University : no hats, faded flannel suits, brogues, carved sticks from West Africa, and no sock suspenders. In the car, under a heap of luggage, appeared the dusty simulacrum of a woman : it was Kent's sister. All three of them were travelling from Havre to Paris. Shannon, very Irish, rather shabby, had such a way with him that he was addressed as Milord. Through the open collar of his shirt could be seen a large four-master tattooed on his chest. It was he who gave the orders. His friend Kent had a retiring and hungry look. He was the son of Julius O. Kent of Vincennes (Indiana), Grand Dragon of the Ku-Klux-Klan of Indiana, chrome magnate : a Puritan, a rascal who had made his own way, wiped his nose on his sleeve for many years, and, to-day threatens all the Prime Ministers in the world and blows the smoke of his cigar into the faces of Kings. Rosemary Kent, who had crossed from New York in the *Leviathan*, was a girl of twenty: the pride of her College: and as lovely as daylight.

The delight of the trio when they sat down to table in France, for that first time in the year, was beyond description. For Americans, the various European countries are more or less in the nature of their native lands, in accordance with their origin: the Irish politicians revisit their pigsties in Drogheda, the inhabitants of New York discover old York, the Jewish Kings of Chicago grow sentimental over their ghetto in Moravia, like a great actress who comes back to visit her mother the concierge. But France provides them with all manner of pasts except their own, which is possibly why they are fond of the country. Life goes for nothing in France: but you may breathe that perfume of ancient decaying civilisation, that carnival aroma that romantics look for in Venice, and pre-war connoisseurs sought in certain houses in China.

'When I am in France,' said Rosemary, 'I always feel as though I were on a holiday.'

And Shannon:

'Paris is both the love-nest and the country-cottage of the United States.'

'Much more than that,' said Kent. 'France is a country that has always stinted herself so as to be able to afford brilliant personalities, and she has sacrificed herself for them for centuries ; and rightly ; it is they who have taught the world to live and think with decency and order. Our dear America is exactly the opposite : a marvellous machine for manufacturing standard happiness which satisfies the majority, but crushes the finer spirits.'

'Yes, we are stifled.'

'To-day,' interrupted Shannon, 'the *Mayflower* should be crossing the Atlantic once more : destination, Panama ! '

'Dear Paris, with your large and lovely laughter so distressing to impaired digestions ! Dear France, the last faithful mirror in which men may discover whether they are being told the truth, and women whether they are still beautiful.'

Kent put up his wireless installation. They all put on their earphones, and with serpentine hissings, Europe descended through the air upon hapless Normandy. They could hear jazz from Madrid, cotton prices from Manchester, snatches of a Jugo-Slav lecture on sleeping sickness which suddenly emerged and drowned a Wagner festival from an invisible Munich. All the peoples of Europe yelled, radiophonically, across the grass. And just at this moment, in the courtyard of the Hostellerie du Moulin-Coquet, Jāli appeared.

Jāli, encouraged by the rustic appearance of the inn, came in to ask for milk and fruit, his customary diet. He was taken aback, for, when he had passed the door, waiters disguised as Normans, with straw in their sabots and cotton caps, carrying rough earthenware jugs of cider, —the whole musical comedy setting of the place, was suddenly metamorphosed into an imposing restaurant, with seats upholstered in jonquil velvet and Maitres d'hotel in tail coats. He was on the point of going out.

'Your Highness! What a piece of luck! We shan't let you go. You're the only person we have been dying to see since your noble exit from that nursery, Cambridge.'

'The worst of all professors is that they will think that Cambridge is the universe.'

'By St. Patrick, when I see things like that, I'm proud to think that Ireland does not join on to Europe.'

His hair standing on end, his coat always buttoned up awry, with a wild look as if he had just been tossed in a blanket, Shannon had one passion only—the hatred of England. Whoever had a grievance against England was his friend; which is what had drawn him to Kent. Jāli too, must surely be a victim of the English. Moreover, Shannon had a powerful influence over his friend Kent, and the latter's sister, Rosemary. The girl could not take her eyes off Jāli.

Jāli was walking to Paris from Dieppe, living on charity and by working on farms. He went out of his way to visit Écouen, where Renaud's mother would not receive him at the chateau, and the porter explained that they did not want any help before the harvest. He spent two days at Renaud's tomb in the parish cemetery. The Prince was still wearing his beggar's clothes which he had exchanged for his Poole suit at Cambridge: corduroy trousers secured by straps below the knee, a red muffler, and an old chauffeur's coat of black leather. Kent presented him to his sister Rosemary, who curtsied.

'It was he, you know, who would not give up the fox: then we had a fight with the others, and Shannon nearly lost an eye.'

'I left London three weeks ago,' said Jāli. 'Starting at the end of the rainy season, as the Buddha directs. I crossed the sea on a cargo boat, as a stowaway, because I hadn't a passport.'

'No passport?'

'No: my Minister was overcome with shame at my adventure. He could no longer decently lunch at the *Turf*: so he closed the Legation and left for Scotland.'

'Are you converting anyone?' asked Kent.

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'Not one. The French are not religious. I thought I had not succeeded in London because I started in too large a city, but here, in the country, it was much worse: when I talked of the Perfect One, no one would listen. Yet, as soon as He went out into the fields, everyone came to greet Him. . . . Near Rouen, I was brought before the magistrate. A village priest gave me some bread: I told him that I had come to France to destroy evil just as an elephant destroys a hut of reeds.'

'Evil is the elephant and you are the reed,' he said: 'these people are savages.'

'I said I should like to see a blind man in a rage.'

'They will abuse you.'

'They can throw stones at me if they like.'

'And if they do?'

'I shall say: 'You are truly kind, you may kill me if you like!''

'And if they do kill you?'

'I shall say 'Thank you': you have delivered me.'

'How wonderful,' said Rosemary Kent. 'What will you have for lunch?'

'My rule is to accept what I am offered, without asking or giving thanks.'

'Tell me, are there many Princes like you in Asia?'

'No, I fancy I am the only one.'

The menu suggested 'Homard a L'Américaine' and 'lèvre a la crême.'

'I only eat milk and fruit,' observed Jāli: 'besides, I no longer have any money.'

'What an extraordinary being!' said Kent. 'My sister has just whispered to me that when she listens to you, she feels she wants to save her soul.'

Rosemary respectfully handed Jāli some lilac.

'I hope flowers are not bad for the soul, your Highness.'

'I have no soul,' he answered; 'no one has a soul.'

'Do you really mean that?'

'Of course; there is no definite object called a soul. Take your motor-car: is the engine the car?'

'No.'

'Are the wheels the car?'

'Certainly not.'

'Is the body the car?'

'Still less.'

'Well then, if neither the engine, nor the wheels, nor the body is the car, the word soul does not connote a definite thing any more than the word car. What exists is a succession of phenomena and sensations: this is continuous, like the progress of monkeys through a forest, who catch hold of one branch and then let go as they grasp another, and so on. In the same way, the Buddha teaches that there is no Ego, but an appearance, what your journalists call personality.'

'So that is the end of the Ego, that European idol with the hundred arms,' said Shannon. And he began, in the most natural manner in the world, a dazzlingly eloquent disquisition, of which not a word remains.

Jāli ate his lunch and said no more. He had never been able to eat and talk at the same time, as white people do. He did not talk, but he looked at Rosemary. It was the first time he had sat beside a woman while eating a meal. She smoked, asked questions, smiled, powdered her nose, but she never seemed to put any food into her mouth, and the meal was over before Jāli thought she had begun. She was truly lovely, with her short yellow hair plastered flat above her ears, the figure of a champion angel, lissom and loose jointed, arms a trifle too long, legs crossed high up, not a day of sadness in her dewy eyes, not a day of sickness under her skin, not a regret in the corner of her mouth: a brand-new face.

She looked at Jāli with parted lips.

'I feel my sister will become a Buddhist when she comes of age,' said Kent.

'Shall we take you to Paris?' asked Shannon, very anxious to make a striking entry down the Avenue du Bois.

'No; I would sooner walk. I shall be there in three days.'

'Where will you live?' asked Rosemary.

'Nowhere: it is of no consequence.'

'But your address?'

'I have none. I expect nothing from anyone.'

'We shall be at the Hotel Dupuytren. But you aren't going to tell me that you have no bank.'

'Indeed I have not. I no longer possess anything but myself.'

'Your Highness, what does it feel like to be no longer rich?'

'It gives you back your hearing, your sight, and your appetite.'

'And yet people always talk of the privileges of the rich.'

'The rich are privileged because, having everything, they can understand quicker than the poor, that everything is nothing.'

He expected a look of contempt. She looked at him hard, with something sharp and shrewd in her expression and her attitude, with that natural imperiousness of the fair woman, a kind of personal radiance, a gift from Phoebus Apollo. She added:

'I like to hear you say that.'

Jāli went out into the road with them, and felt quite overcome when he got there. Their car was a fine new Bugatti painted blue, of the Grand Prix type. If Kent had invited him to drive he would not have refused.

'Would you care to take the wheel?' said Kent, laughing, as he sat down in the driver's seat.

'It wouldn't be long before we ran into an apple tree, 'said Rosemary. (You must only ask Orientals to do what they know how.) Jāli trembled.

'True,' he answered, calmly. 'I could not drive you where I am going.'

Jāli entered Paris one morning by the Rond-Point de la Défense. The panorama before him dipped in the centre, under the weight of the Seine, and then rose once more, stretching towards the Arc de Triomphe. He stopped in the Bois de Boulogne, by Longchamps, attracted by the winding stream and the sweep of virgin grass: every landscape containing water is a paradise to the Oriental. There was nothing to remind him of the flat stagnant pools of Karastra, surrounded by muddy banana groves and slopes of undergrowth, where crocodiles lie sunning themselves, on the look-out for vagrant pigs: at the Blériot factory the piles for the foundations of their three great chimneys were being driven into the water. Jāli sat down on the bank of the little lake, under the willow. In a place not very different from this the Buddha would sit, crouching on his yellow mantle, folded four-square, and ruminate on his non-existence. Just as here, children—so the legend runs—came and sailed their paper boats in front of him among the water-lilies.

Jāli stayed there three days, under the willow: he would like to have tended it, and smoothed out its leaves: he looked at it and touched it with affection, for all trees are the brothers of that Sacred Fig-Tree, under which He-Who-Knows had his revelation: they share in the honours given to Buddha. It has been rightly said, Jāli thought, that the tree is for Buddhists what the cross is for Christians.

Neither temperance, nor chastity, nor silence troubled him: he dreamed the old dreams, and devised new ones. Not far off, in the evening, the Young Communists practised street warfare, when they got out of the factories: Jāli remembered that Renaud had said there was a great deal of ill-will in France: so he fell to fasting, by way of penitence. Then, as the nights were still chilly, he built a cabin. This attracted the notice of the park-keepers, and his shelter was destroyed. He compared himself with his Master, when the demons tried to chase him away from his tree, and he smiled. He crossed a bridge and took refuge on the heights between Meudon and St. Cloud. In the foreground were the swollen masses of gasometers: and behind them the vast, looming bulk of Paris with its myriad hues. From this hill he could grasp and dominate it. He reminded himself that all the noblest discourses of the Master had had a background like this, a forest, but a forest whence one could get a view of the city. From a distance cities seem to be eternal: it is only on approaching them that one sees that they are constantly melted down again, like money. As soon as one gets on to a height, everything unessential disappears, only the substance remains.

Then Jāli repeated to himself the sentence which seemed to him the noblest of all: a description of Nirvana, brief, but so complete that it calmed him and sustained him also: 'Broken is the body, extinguished the imagination: the sensations have vanished: activity has ceased: and consciousness has entered into rest.' All Buddhism was there, with its creed of annihilation, untainted by heroics or despair, and with all its infinite peace. Jāli repeated it two thousand times. The oftener he said it, the seed of his thought became so fine that he could hardly feel its movement.

As the Buddhist rule forbids its followers to remain in a town from evening until dawn, Jāli went down into Paris every morning to beg and then ascended the heights once more, his begging bowl suspended round his neck, erect, silent, and with eyes cast down. They gave him food at the kitchens of the Pavillon Bleu (and he could have had collected on Mondays plenty for the whole week, if he had been allowed to keep food from one day to another). They also threw him old uniforms through the railings of the Saint Cloud barracks : he sewed the rags together with pieces of string and made himself a garment.

Freed from his family, thinking no more of Karastra, just as if he had eaten the lotus which makes a man forget his country, and having met without difficulty the tests of chastity and poverty, although he had but little hope left that he would conquer the world, he extended his conquests over himself from day to day. His was the privilege of self-abandonment, the promise of a speedy metamorphosis. It is true, Paris is not Benares, and no king robed in white, of an enquiring mind, hastens to meet him on elephants surrounded by torches, no courtesan Ambapâli waits for him in a mango grove, no minister invites him to dine for the benefit of his spiritual advice, no sophist takes enough interest in him to come down from the mountains and lay intellectual traps for him ; but the West must be taken as it comes.

And yet, Mâra, the malicious, is on the look-out for all of us.

It was five in the morning. The mist was smoking over St. Cloud. The dawn broke, foul and colourless : it was the time when children are woken up to be given bitter draughts, and the hour when those condemned to death are told their appeals are rejected. A few young men in dinner jackets and a few women in chinchilla or diamanté cloaks were crossing the garden of a villa at the gate of which automobiles were waiting : they were going back to bed. At that moment Jāli passed, arrayed in his yellow rags, going down in search of food.

'Some poor wretch of a husband ! ' said one lady.

Jāli looked up. He was thinking, as she spoke, that if he could encircle the earth in one second he would, at that moment, be arriving home, at the loveliest hour of the day, in the evening, when the Chinamen sell smoking curry, or the fishermen wade up to their armpits into the violet stream and splash each other with water ; when the Europeans go out bare-headed, only carrying their helmets to salute each other from their respective carriages. One instant of coolness, which will not come again, slips between the blazing heat of the day and the heavy moisture of the night. And at that hour he would go to the Palace reserved for her whom he loved the most.

Walking down the steps—in the Gémier style—of the house, with cubic terraces flanked by a sort of casemates in reinforced concrete, the mistress of the establishment, in the gilded splendour of her evening frock (ignoring the chill of dawn which might kill, if not herself, at any rate her orchids) accompanied her guests to the gate. Jāli came near, and their eyes met. She gave a shriek.

'What! Don't you recognise me? Angèle, Angèle Ventre of London, Commercial Road! Now Angèle Lyris, called 'Velvet-Tongue.''

It was indeed Angèle who had presided over his first night in Europe! Herself, with her heavy blue eyelashes, and her lovely, husky voice. She flung her arms round Jāli's neck.

'What a state you're in, darling! And your hair! Have you just come out of quod?'

Then, in a whisper:

'Those pearlies, dearie—that was a bit of all right, that was. I had 'em cleaned pretty quick, and then I set up shop, as you can see for yourself. No more street corners for me: you know how it is, the first little lot of money is everything. After that, you can pick them up for the asking.

Sorry, old dear,' she added, 'I'm passing out. I must go to bed, after I've seen these people off: but come and have lunch here at 2 o'clock, and we'll have a talk; remember the address: 3 Rue Pierre-Benôit.'

Angèle Lyris had bought this house from an American woman in distress,—if that is ever possible. The era of sham lacquer and tiger skins which began with Gaby Deslys a little before the war, is over; gallantry has come under the influence of the Museum of Decorative Arts. Here are drawing-rooms papered with straw, and boudoirs lined with shark-skin, ceilings covered with parchment and staircases with doe-skin, the whole illuminated by tubes of mercury and lighthouse lenses, with boats and atlases and globes, and more boats, to complete the effect. The life of women is not like that of men, a systematic pressure on the amorphous mass of society; it is a capricious game with amazing ups and downs like those on a fever chart, and with reversals of fortune, which none the less find them entirely at their ease and always prepared. Having sold the jewels which Jāli gave her and returned to Paris, Angèle was soon taken up by a lady dealer in antiquities, who was never seen, to whom she added, among others, a young and wealthy author and his friends, who were seen rather too often.

Full of pride at being acquainted with a saint, Angèle offered Jāli her house: he would only accept admission to the garden where, thenceforward, he came very often towards evening to perform his ablutions and to pray. That company of young men who frequented Angèle Lyris—of the type that Bossuet has so happily named 'Fols amateurs de siècle,'—the interviews that he had with them on the heights overlooking the city, all this seemed to Jāli as natural as the life of the Buddha in that elegant society that surrounded the great Indian courtesans, when kings, Brahmins, high officials and wealthy merchants came to listen to Him-Who-Knows. Angèle was for him a sort of Beauty-of-Benares.

Jāli began to be able to distinguish between the various European peoples; until then, like all Asiatics, he could not see the difference between a Portuguese and a Swede. Now he could recognise two or three races, although he still confused an Englishman with a German. Among the 'foreign devils' he discovered an entire hierarchy; among the myriads of odd creatures that go to make up Western society he began to discern shades and gradations: nations and individuals. The further West one went, the more complicated it became. He discovered that the French were very fond of women.

'When they talk to them,' said he, 'they smile and are charming.'

Moreover, these white people behaved much better at home than in the East; they seemed without racial prejudice and tolerably intelligent. Riquet, the young millionaire author who was understood to reign over Angèle's establishment, was so polite and modest that no one knew his surname. He was called simply Riquet, and it was difficult to look upon him as Angèle's protector, for it was rather she who protected him against so many friends. He who ruled here by his violent, highly-strung temperament and vital force, was Riquet's intimate friend, Jean Claude Potaschmann.

Potaschmann? Any relation of Mr. Joshua Potaschmann of the City? His son, but a Frenchman. Can this pale, eager, restless youth be descended from that gross financier? Yes, and in the direct line: in the Jewish families at Moscow, just as in the Old Testament, there is always a left and a right. On the right, an obese King, opportunist and conservative: on the left, an emaciated, uncompromising Prophet who every day embarrasses the other with fresh enemies. Such is the contrast presented by the Potaschmann family. Jean Claude edited an advanced publication subsidised by Riquet; a Review on the extreme right entitled: *God.* The editorial committee dined every Thursday at Angèle's house at St. Cloud.

'We will take God by the throat,' wrote Potaschmann one day, 'and force Him to reveal His purpose.' God duly functioned once a month, and gave His (highly tendencious) explanation of the Universe, either through the medium of table-turning, or in the journal of this young and budding Moses. Potaschmann had taken up an advanced position in the Catholic party, more advanced than that of the Neo-Thomists, and backed both the Sacré Cœur and the Kremlin at the same time. His intelligence, in which perversity was the near neighbour of profanity, tempted him to mix up all the cards so as to begin the game again under better conditions. To the consternation of the Seminaries, the last number of the review *God* reproduced photographs of God by Man Ray, side by side with fetishes from Upper Oubanghi.

The air was full of all manner of ultimate verities. Shattering conversions, homo-sexuality, propaganda in favour of despair, rules of a Suicide Club founded to explore the Beyond, a return to public confession as in the Catacombs, plans for an early campaign against the Devil.

Jāli learnt to listen quickly, and to answer quickly too.

‘ But, Prince, this Nirvana of yours, have you found it ? ’

‘ Not yet,’ said Jāli, ‘ I am trying to deserve it ; but I know where it is.’

‘ At least, Monsieur, you are conscious of the divine ? ’ asked an enlightened little creature, all in pearl grey.

‘ Of course he is, you silly little thing,’ answered Potaschmann. ‘ Our Asia cannot escape that.’

‘ I am not so sure,’ said Riquet ; ‘ your Asia is like all old women after the War : she has cut her hair short, torn up her will, and taken to dancing.’

‘ Do you see the Buddha, Monsieur ? Can you let us have any revelations ? We will publish them without abridgment.’

‘ We are forbidden to boast of our ecstasies,’ answered Jāli.

‘ Then what’s the use ? If you want to save the West, you must show us God.’

As he said this, young Potaschmann’s eyes flickered like the ears of a hare.

‘ The Buddha says that humanity must perish before God manifests Himself.’

‘ The *God* group is in entire sympathy with Sakyamouni : admitting so much, my dear fellow, you must then see our difficulty ; if you adapt Buddhism to the West, you fall into Theosophy. . . .’

‘ . . . Which is to Buddhism,’ said an oiled and curled young gentleman, 'what casts are to the originals.'

'... or, if you don't adapt it, but serve it up exactly as it is, then—forgive me for saying so—every moment you are perilously near Comic Opera.'

As he spoke, Potaschmann pointed at Jāli's yellow robe.

'I care nothing for ridicule,' he answered: 'I have abandoned everything. I am 'a man departed!''

''A man departed!' What formulae our Asia seems to find,' said Potaschmann, whose racial past was stirred by this allusion to the nomad life, and he grew lyrical. 'Europe only contains men that have 'arrived.' Let us be friends, Jāli, shall we? I am a white, you know: well, I'm not proud of it.'

'You are wrong,' answered Jāli.

Potaschmann was gripped by the nervous desire to be immediately loved. He bent over Jāli and caressed him.

'You know our Bergson is in sympathy with Buddhism, and our Einstein, through his doctrine of relativity, agrees with him. Surely there is nothing to keep us apart?'

'Excuse me, Potaschmann,' said Riquet: 'remember that Schopenhauer saw, not without reason, in the Jewish character, in its optimistic materialism, the living antithesis to the Buddhist asceticism and pessimism.'

'Pooh! I'm converted. I don't mind what you say, and you only say it to annoy me. Are we friends?'

'I only had one European friend and I lost him,' answered Jāli.

'What was his name?'

Jāli was silent. Potaschmann, tortured by that desire for information that is so nearly allied to propaganda, pressed him. Was it a Frenchman? Young? Who had lived in the East? Yes? Dead? Why, of course it was Renaud d'Écouen who had been at school with him at Rouen. A first-class fellow . . . good-looking too: made to enjoy pretty women and fine ideas, and then he went off and died, like a fool.'

Jean Claude Potaschmann had such a sensual and blatant way of talking of happiness and such a horror-stricken attitude towards misfortune, that Jāli preferred to avoid these two subjects in his company.

'Oh, well: it's only what we must all come to,' said Angèle.

'Don't for God's sake talk like that!' said Potaschmann, who believed heartily in the value of all things earthly, and every Thursday brought with him an apparatus for all the guests to register their arterial tension after dinner.

'Nothing is so exasperating as that wretched old system of yours, in which you all go on living though you're not supposed to believe in life.'

Jāli felt that these young men were curious about him, but that they had no desire to be saved. They could talk of nothing but instinct, delirium, the subconscious: then they came out with delicate little romances, dry and clear in outline, in the purest French psychological tradition. Entrancing little egoists! The women they frequented or those who were friends of Angèle, women of the people, were more responsive to an appeal to the heart. Among them were Margot d'Ambly, the lovely nurse, Jeanne Métral who kept a pink bookshop, and Guita Pascali of the Opera.

Jāli no longer wore his yellow robe; but nearly every evening he talked to these women, who felt flattered, and listened: when they were told that yellow was the pariah colour, they made it the fashion. The woods of St. Cloud were a carpet of jonquils. Jāli treated each one of them with gentleness and kindness, and even with gallantry.

'As the bee does not damage the flowers when sucking honey from them, so the wise man knows how to walk among women, on his way through the city.'

They were all hungry for local colour. When Jāli wanted to explain the origin of pain :

'Tell us about Kamasoûtra instead,' they asked greedily. Like all European women they were allured by the passionate *décor* of Asia and hoped for recipes and erotic novelties. But Asia is chaste ; her emotional life is simple, and the spirit that inspires her loves is naive. Jāli was too inexperienced and diffident to explain this ; but he felt it. But how could he make it clear to these women, in whom a performance of *Scheherazade*, or an item at the *Palace*, in which a handsome ochreous dancer torments a white girl, had left desires that they did not care to acknowledge. Jāli thought of their opposite numbers in India, whom Ghandi calls 'his fallen sisters,' and of whom the great Hindu had known how to make use in his revolutionary activities. Jāli, too, held out his hands to them, to raise them, win their confidence, and persuade them to adopt some honourable and recognised profession. He lavished moral advice upon them, and called them his 'disciples.' They agreed, but fled for refuge to their instincts. They agreed with the young Prince and put their arms round his neck. They caressed him, for that is the only way in which women can express approval. But it was only when they were very tired from dancing that they dreamt of a monastery as an agreeable retreat, and longed to be one of those *apasikas*, one of those nuns of whom Jāli talked to them. In fact, they really played with him as though he had been a little bear, a pekinese: if he had not been so handsome they would have 'dropped' him long ago.

'Is it true that you can read the future? (What a pity my paws are so dirty.)'

'Is it true that Bérengère wanted to present you with her sables and you stamped on them and turned your back on the poor thing?'

'I simply said that vanity is increased by luxury, and that the slaughter of animals brings down the wrath of Heaven. . . .'

'Is it true that animals talk to you?'

They clustered round him eagerly and warmed themselves at him as though he had been a stove. But some of them had already forgotten that he had preached abstinence, and were getting drunk: others, at the opposite extreme, plunged into an excess of piety and shaved their heads—indeed, one of them, of hysterical temperament, fell into a trance. In Angèle's house there was now a singular atmosphere of mental disorder, of puerile piety and nervous devotion which made everybody uncomfortable: especially Jāli. These women were beyond him : Paris was, he guessed, full of dangerous delights, mauve dusks and brilliant dawns, displayed as in an advertisement. The voluptuousness of Asia, with which travellers adorn their tales, especially on their return, is heavy and full of good humour, with broad effects of aphrodisiac draughts, that are in no way disquieting : here there was something much more dangerous and penetrating. Jāli dug his nails into his hands. Every night, when he went out into the street, he carried with him the perfume of soft, warm flesh, odorous with soap and rose-water. His senses were those of an Oriental, quick and accustomed to free indulgence since the age of puberty ; and they were roused. He found it hard to endure the sight of these unclothed, white creatures. Their scents, above all, tortured him.

At night, owing to the cold which had troubled him since he had been sleeping in the open air, he had the most frightful dreams. Yes, there could be no doubt it was Mâra's army—monsters with animals' heads, alligators that split into two, cobras that swelled up like dough and turned into volcanoes in eruption, flinging into the air uprooted trees, girls' limbs, and fair-haired heads. The Master had but to show the demon his placid broad face, like a lotus, and the victory was won : but Jāli was not the Master, and when he appeared the enemy grinned and the Tempter remained.

Blue-cold with the dew, he awoke.

One morning he noticed that he could no longer pray: only his lips moved. His power of concentration, above all, was weakening: and, through the gaps, the image of Rosemary, Kent's sister, entered freely and, unsummoned, took possession of him. She stretched herself over Jāli's thought as upon a couch, and the memory of her became more potent than her presence.

Then, without even taking leave, Jāli left Angèle and ceased to frequent her house. He climbed up to his hermitage once more, and began to practise inner concentration, regulating his breathing and striving to reduce it. He stunned himself by repeating words: they formed geometrical patterns in his brain, and gradually faded into a tenuous filmy cobweb.

'The two-legged body is impure, stinking, full of infection: in every way it is disgusting.'

'The human body is an empty box.'

He took to fasting again, which he had given up, and to the forms of meditation practised by the Yoghis. He grew thinner and his skin became lemon-coloured. Dishes of food were brought to him from every side: he let the pile of food accumulate round him without touching it, so that it might revolt him and effectively remove his appetite. On one occasion he was found motionless, one hand full of filth and the other of money: and for many days he repeated without ceasing: 'Money: filth: money: filth.'

He succeeded in breathing so little that he could hardly feel the movement of his pulse, and the blood came into his mouth. He tried to 'rectify' the spirit as though it had been alcohol. When he came down from Saint Cloud his legs would hardly bear him: he felt as though he were flying and his head sang. . . . The beasts of the six kingdoms: body, senses, smells, savours, tangible things, and thoughts, would they at last stop crawling towards him, greedy to arouse sensation and then desire? He had already ceased to submit: he would soon subdue. He entered into meditation at will, awaiting the moment of his union with the absolute. Seated on the grass, having lost all feeling of the Ego, he penetrated the places of a higher freedom. . . .

Suddenly someone pulled at his cloak, and he awoke: it was Kent and his sister Rosemary.

'I say, are you asleep? We've been standing in front of you for five minutes and you did not see us.'

The fall to earth was so abrupt that Jāli felt his nerves give way: he was like certain mystics who, when they came out of a trance and find themselves alive, begin to sob. The sun was shining once more: nature, soft as music, motor cars, memories, women's dresses, winds, struck upon his senses and he perceived them. And the image of her who came to rest upon his shoulder like a dove. . . . This Prince, so much the master of himself, on his way towards the greatest conquests, already so high above his fellow men, was he to stop short before the feeblest obstacle? Hatred of self, resignation, ecstasy, was all the progress of these latter days to be destroyed?

'We looked for you everywhere: we sent out hotel messengers, private detectives, couriers from the American Express Co., everywhere we could think of. Before leaving for Greece, Shannon went to your Legation. What on earth is your address?'

'The woods of Saint Cloud; near the terrace: I go up every evening.'

'Roughing it, eh? I love camping out,' said Kent. 'So we found you ourselves, at last: how priceless!'

'There is no such thing as chance, Kent: only a chain of causation, sometimes invisible.'

'Oh well, all right. Now we've found you, you must come along with us.'

Rosemary whispered something in her brother's ear.

'My sister insists on your putting on your yellow robe again: she says you don't look like a real saint in your old colonial infantry cloak.'

'Oh, bottle it, you swine!'

Jāli was by nature diffident, and their white mannerisms, so brutal and direct, put him out of countenance.

'Now I've hurt you, I'm so sorry. Do explain . . . I should so much like to know. I'm only just out of school, and I don't know anything. Besides, it's dreadful to belong to a Presbyterian family. Do teach me your faith.'

'Don't talk about your faith, you will lose it,' answered Jāli.

'What egoism!'

'The Buddha has himself set forth his doctrine, and its splendour lies within it: it has nothing pleasant or attractive on the surface. You are exactly opposite from what you ought to be, if you would approach the truth.'

'What am I then?' asked Rosemary, her eyes shining with her desire to be defined and to smooth away all difficulties.

'You are thirst: Thirst for existence, thirst for pleasure, thirst for what must pass away.'

'But I assure you I'm not!'

'Your face assures me that you are. You are the thirst that leads from re-birth to re-birth and prevents escape from pain.'

'I am not a child. I don't care about life,' said Rosemary, langourously.

'Children do not care about life. But you,' went on Jāli, severely, 'you live on the need for laying hold on what is outside you, above, below, and all round you. But whatever may be the bait, you must know that there is always a hook beneath it: and that is how the demon catches us. At this moment, you stretch out your hand to me, as towards something you desire. . . .'

'I do wish you wouldn't preach, your Highness. You are so handsome when your mouth is not moving.'

'Then goodbye. You will think of me, and of my truths, one day, when your eyelids are rusted, when the years have drained you of your sap, scorched your face, broken your will, and your lamp is empty of the oil.'

Jāli said no more. He laid his open hands upon his thighs and closed his eyes. Then he opened them again, and got up, without addressing a word to the two Americans. He folded his cloak into four, and went to sit down upon the grass, on the bank of the Seine.

Jāli's only grudge against his friends was in so far as they had disturbed his serenity. If it happened again, he would punish himself and keep his arm raised in the air for a whole day and a whole night. But how much more serious and how much less easy to deal with was the impulse that mastered him, from time to time: the inability to withstand Rosemary's eyes: and the impossibility of departing from them. That was the secret reason for his anger. Those slaves with tattooed foreheads, who had been his Queens, those charming, yielding creatures, whose henna was the merest artifice to ape the fairness of the higher races, what had they in common with this tall and beautiful Aryan archangel?

Evening was falling: the noise had diminished. The workmen were going home on bicycles. Jāli got up, after having spent the remainder of the day in meditation, and walked noiselessly towards his solitude. At the gate of Saint Cloud, Rosemary was waiting for him in a car.

'I knew you would pass here on your way,' she said. 'Here is your robe. I bought the stuff and sewed it myself.'

Jāli took it without thanking her.

'Goodbye, Mademoiselle.'

'No: not goodbye. I shall come back to-morrow. Give me your advice: is it wrong to be in love?'

'To love is to fall under the yoke of joy and pain.'

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'Can one avoid disaster by living the simple life?'

'Begin by avoiding desire as you would a serpent's fangs.'

'I desire nothing . . . except to be always near you,' said Rosemary.

And she put her fair head on Jāli's hands.

Paris lay below them, or rather the two cities that are both Paris: in the foreground, the American city with its harsh, geometrical districts, its rectilinear traffic: beyond it, the old French city, with its restless facades, the soft lines of its useless monuments: like Karastra, where the European cantonment lies on one side, and the native city on the other. In his heart, Jāli was sorry for poor little France: the Latins are the Orientals of Europe. But France had no choice: she had either to become American or Bolshevik. Jāli took Rosemary's hands, and, as she bent her head, held them in his own. She raised her eyes and looked at him till he melted beneath her gaze.

'What you told me was said of the Master, Jāli, could also be said of you: 'His smile was so charming that with it alone he could have ruled the world.''

‘ He smiled because he suffered.’

‘ Do you suffer ? ’

‘ O Well of Loyalty, all who have had faith have suffered. Think of Keshub, Chunder Sen, Pawāri Baba, Tagore, Rama Krishna, actually poisoned by the Brahmins in the nineteenth century, Ghandi in prison. . . .’

Jāli took Rosemary by the ears.

‘ As I look at you I think of the Perfect One’s encounter with a woman. ‘ They recognised each other,’ says the text, ‘ though they had never met.’

‘ I recognised you, Jāli, because you are wisdom.’

‘ Do you think so ? Only a wise person can recognise another.’

‘ In the first place, I have heard it said that the great Saviours only come down to the world in periods of great distress,’ Rosemary went on : ‘ and surely this hour is yours. I think you will save millions of us—whole countries.’

An eager tradition of proselytism came to Rosemary’s lips, from the depths of her Puritan heredity.

‘ Nobody here wants salvation. They all say : ‘ All wisdom comes from the East,’ but no one believes it.’

‘ Jāli, you give me the feeling of a thoroughbred turning a mill.’

‘ It is a contagion with which, under the name of Progress, Europe has infected America, and now it comes back to us from there.'

'It seems to move with the sun.'

'Yes, ideas, like cities, move towards the West. Who knows? The astrologers at Karastra taught me that law of magic: the pupil will kill his teacher.'

'You are just,' said Rosemary: 'the West does not deceive you, but you do not want to take vengeance on it.'

'It would be better to know nothing of the West, as our fathers did, than to have mean, false, trivial ideas of it.'

'There can be nothing of that in your mind,' Rosemary went on: 'I feel your silent power: I feel you are a saviour. You seem to carry me on wings.'

The Beggar Prince looked at her with that frightened expression that he often wore and which was not without its charm. She was afraid of nothing. Her skin might be thin, but she was the grand-daughter of those men who fired their revolvers from their pockets through their trousers. American women alarmed him: the tall white men made him nervous to begin with: what was he to think of their women, who are the real masters, since all the desires and labours of their men are on their behalf alone. Everything that must be resisted here comes from them—luxury and the desire for change, these modern incarnations of the demon.

Rosemary looked hard at the Prince:

'You have two lovely little lights at the bottom of your eyes, Jāli; and your eyes are so narrow at the moment that they are all I can see; I really believe I love you.'

One must know something of Oriental Love, its long labours of approach, that interminable adulation that does not express itself except under cover of metaphors, will not venture beyond a play on words or discreet poetical allusions inspired by the best classics, to understand the effect that such a point-blank avowal produced on Jāli. He trembled, though he made an effort to remain unmoved.

'You must not love me,' he answered, 'until I become a saint.'

'In any case you are already a very great man. Have you ever loved?'

'O Vase of Virtue, I have never known any women except those that had been bought, taken in war, or given to me as presents.'

The shadows passed, and the sun began to gild all the lovely movement of a summer dawn.

One could see the tugs churning up the water, twisting into corkscrews the reflections of the tall straight poplars. It was the old Sèvres landscape, with its old-fashioned mauve tints, worn threadbare by the Impressionists, which Parisians only know of through the dealers in the Rue La Boétie. Jāli knew that the French, like the Chinese, detest the open air. He himself responded to the novelty of these Western scenes, the beauty of which consists in being reduced to human proportions, well composed—never vague, never confused as in the tropics: the heights of Clamart with their undulating lines, Montrouge smeared with soot, lime, and ochreous earth, with its windows flashing in the sunlight, like the little inlaid mirrors of Siam. Instead of stagnant water, prickly fruits and monstrous nettles, it is the Seine, gentle stream made for Gallic song, wine and simple feasts beneath riverside arbours, Arcadian embraces, painters' palettes scraped against the tree trunks, with, here and there, a flash of gold from the ancient locomotives, like shining buckles on the Grande-Ceinture line.

These innocent resorts chosen by fate for so ominous a meeting between the two races were like those futile villages marked upon the map with crossed swords, to indicate some historic battle, or magnified in spite of themselves by a treaty of peace.

Rosemary rested, stretched out beside him.

'Why do you smile, Rosemary?'

'Why should I not? I am the daughter of a happy people where everyone wakes up whistling.

'I care for none but the unhappy.'

'I have a great deal of money,' she said; 'we will do good with it. In America it costs the eyes out of your head to do good. There are no poor. They have to be fetched from a very long way off.'

Mystical union of these two young hearts eager for improvement! Fair and dark, their clasped fingers looked like a keyboard. Then there rose in Jāli a warmer light than any he had felt until that day: less dazzling than the one that had encircled on the roofs of London the image of the Perfect One; it did not force him to lower his eyes and prostrate himself upon the ground; it entered into him like the sun, through all his pores, penetrated his clothes and warmed his blood. His brown hands enwreathed Rosemary's oval face, smoothed her hair which, cut straight across her forehead, looked like the edge of a sword blade. He could not help continually touching this mass of blonde metal. Strange new alliance of the North and of the South, of the East and of the West, under this Parisian sky, without gods and without vultures.

'I shall not stay in this place,' said Jāli. 'Too many people walk about here, inquisitive persons ask me questions, and journalists worry me. In our time, self-effacement has become so strange and so rare that it attracts everyone's attention. People think me fabulously rich and when I ask for food, they throw stones at me. I am treated as a kept nigger, a fakir, or a dervish who eats powdered glass. It appears that my female disciples down there have given rise to scandal: now, under the pretext of giving their dresses to the poor, they go about naked. Besides, Paris is stifled by the spirit of criticism and is overcome by the fear of banality. They want a new revelation daily. Here, words alone have any power: but the voice itself, the ideas that are clothed by it, and the essential force that sets these ideas in motion, interests no one. They prefer ignorance to knowledge, though from the former come, indifferently, birth and mourning, affection and despair. Rama Krishna said that one got a clearer view of Christ from the East than from the West: one gets a better view of the devil from Paris than from Karastra. Fool that I am! I contend against desire, and in the very city where desire is King!'

'The saints only succeed in countries where people are bored,' said Rosemary. 'But I am sure that we shall triumph. I shall explain to my brother Hamilton what it is that draws me to you. He has a fine soul.' (She said that as one might say: 'He has a kind face,' and indeed she really meant something of the sort.) He will understand me. I will follow you and help you, as much as I may.'

'Then come,' said Jāli. 'Let us depart. Leave everything. Give up your extravagances. Burn those manufactured stuffs, woven with the sweat of the poor; dress simply. You will be respected by everyone: I will defend you. Our relations will be perfectly pure: I shall call you my sister.' And Jāli, also lying full length on the grass, laid his head against Rosemary's, in a fraternal greeting, as horses do.

BOOK THREE : III

"I AM not a saint. I am not the Perfect One,' said Jāli. 'The shadow of the tree under which I am sitting, instead of remaining motionless like that of the Sacred Fig-tree, must needs move with the sun, like any other. I cannot cross rivers without getting wet. Neither on my arms nor on my knees do I bear the thirty-two marks of those who shall not be born again. Do you see any earthquakes, any lightnings in the ravished heavens, all that should foretell my approaching illumination ?'

'I shall see them one day,' said Rosemary.

They were now established in the park of Marly, near those stagnant pools and heaps of earth that recall the foundations of the palace now destroyed. They spent the nights in an abandoned optical telegraph.

'Illumination will never come to me,' thought Jāli, with bitterness, 'for I love this woman, and every day I am now getting further from perfection. My only successes in the West have been with women. They are easy, of course, and they do not last. But how can I expect any others, seeing that I am continually losing a little more myself? I find satisfaction in abandoning the eternal truths, and burying myself in confusion and darkness.'

'The food is ready,' said Rosemary.

She was enjoying herself, and recalled her childhood in the Yosemite valley, the canvas tents, the bathes in the iced Merced, the rainbow trout, the deer browsing under the great red trees, among the Fords covered with tarpaulins to keep off the dew.

With bare feet, and wearing a garment of white linen, she brought what she had cooked, in an earthenware dish. Like all Americans, she was used to doing without servants. They sat down —he squatting on his heels—and ate with their fingers.

Jāli, thou art no longer a man awaiting the ineffable: henceforward thou art one of a suburban pair, taking a meal!

The croaking frog reminded Jāli of Karastra: Karastra, the delicious meals of fresh gingerbread, of roast bananas and cocoanut, brought by bare-footed servants. As long as he had lived alone, he took no notice of what he ate: to-day, he was not far from complaining of this dried cod—sure and certain sign that he had set up housekeeping. He tried to reassure himself.

'Could I not, without attaining sanctity, be, like every created thing, a simple messenger of God? The divine is not miraculous: but it would be miraculous if one of God's creatures that was pure in heart should search for truth and not find it.'

But what is the use of all this? Jāli will get no further. The woman has come at her own unerring hour, at a point of least resistance, at the very moment, when that centrifugal force of charity and kindness which had carried him in the first outburst of enthusiasm to the other end of the world, to the rescue of the West, was growing weaker. The West! The East! How far away he was from the time when, in Renaud's company, he played with abstract terms, thinking them modifiable, to be moulded at will, or at the call of a vocation. Now the earth seemed to him a very old adventure, whose end has long been appointed, where there is no room for individual enthusiasms. Everything that at Karastra seemed so clear, so easy, is here confused, and grows illusory and insoluble. The world of mirages is not the Equator, it is Hampstead and St. Cloud.

What a lovely body she has, this daughter of America! That arched back and straight belly, that white skin freckled here and there like old books in a country house. Full of sleeping treasures. Jāli began to covet her as the yellow people covet California. Then he strove to dismiss her from his thoughts.

London. Paris. Slightly different welcomes but identical result: a complete check. What was needed to make a successful soul-winner, was to provide people with something to amuse them. Those who are unhappy will have nothing to do with consolations which compel them to further sacrifices. Would the Asiatic wave in the time of Montesquieu, and the later one in the age of the Goncourts, have remained so famous if instead of Chinese jars and Japanese prints Europe had been confronted with a serious exposition of Confucianism, or the complete text of the Upanishads? To force an age like this to accept a rigid rule of life, one would have to be God incarnate.

'But you are, Jāli!'

'No, Rosemary. I have waited long: I think so no more. Look at me well: I have nothing supernatural in my eyes. My body has nothing immaterial about it, nor is it impervious to bullets. Imperfect, created by an imperfect force that strove, as one can feel, towards perfection, but could achieve nothing better than what I am.'

Jāli spoke with a gesture of discouragement.

'What has Paris in common with such a country as that from which I come, where even the personal pronoun does not exist, where everything is collective, and even personal identity is barely defined? 'Paris' implies millions of clear-cut personalities, millions of ideas 'in the air,' in a very lively oxygen where fires are brighter than elsewhere, but not so warm, just as on the higher plateaux of Tibet. A man tries as hard to get himself known here as at Karastra, he does his utmost to hide himself under pseudonyms, and even to conceal himself under the designation of his functions, so as not to attract the attention of evil spirits. I myself lived surrounded by magical prohibitions, of threatening and mystic figures, unlucky days, and functionaries whose business it was to observe the shapes of clouds, and court officials charged with the oversight of Succubi: how can I explain our supernatural terrors to white people who laugh at them, and force their way straight forward, fearing nothing? I now know that I should have no influence over them: it is they who have influenced me: I shall never be like the Buddha, I shall never be in possession of knowledge.'

'Not if we pray together a great deal, Jāli?'

'No, I shall never be delivered now.'

'Have we not renounced everything?'

'No, Rosemary, we have not renounced each other.'

. . . .

'Come,' said Jāli, abruptly, 'let us set forth.'

'Where are we going?' asked Rosemary.

'What matter? The Buddha enjoins us not to stay in the same place for more than three consecutive days. We must walk. All that is right is painful. Life must needs be hard. Besides, there is nothing to keep us. We belong to no country.'

They left the woods of Marly, and the first dead leaves rustled beneath their feet. They could hear the chestnuts fall and burst, or roll along the ground. That evening they dined on blackberries, acorns, and mushrooms. Autumn had begun, and the leaves kindled by October gave out sunlight long after the sun had set. At the edge of the wood, the west wind from the plain blew into their faces. One behind the other they took the road from Louveciennes to Versailles. It began to rain: the day was Sunday. The wet asphalt shone like a mirror under the lamps of the stream of cars returning home. Red lights in one direction and white lights in the other, preceded by long flashing cones of radiance, veined with rain. They walked at the side of the road and the passing vehicles covered them with mud. At Versailles, Jāli proposed to take the road to Rambouillet. Rosemary stopped.

'I feel cold,' she said. 'I think I have a fever.'

Jāli looked at her. She was livid. Where could he take her now that the rainy season was about to begin? Perhaps it would be best to leave her at the American Hospital.

'I will stop a car and get you taken to your brother. To-morrow, if you are better, you shall come back. I will wait for you, at the same time, at this gate,' said Jāli. She suddenly felt so ill that she did not refuse. She guessed he was annoyed. In the presence of that blank face (as she described it), and the exquisite courtesy of him who called her 'Rose of Innocence,' and knew nothing of the delightful Western vulgarity of anger, Rosemary burst into tears.

'The white peoples have lost all capacity for simple living,' thought Jāli. 'Even if the spirit consents, the body will not obey. They talk too much, and sleep too much. Besides, it is my fault: who ever dreamt of achieving his salvation in the company of a woman?' When he was alone, he felt himself guilty, but resolute.

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It was on the third day, at sunset, that Rosemary came back: she was better.

'Can we start again to-night?' asked Jāli.

'In what direction?'

'On foot, towards the South: I shall spend the winter at Mentone.'

Rosemary blushed. She did not send away her car. She explained that she had caught a bad cold and that the doctor had forbidden her to live in the open air. She had not found her brother. She had gone to one of her aunts, the wife of a Mississippi judge, who lived on the left bank. There she had heard that, her brother's vacation being over, he had gone back to Cambridge, and that her parents were anxious about her. She was afraid of her father, a radical millionaire, who had never lost the brutality of the working man.... How could she explain to them at a distance?

Jāli understood.

'When does your boat leave?' he asked her with infinite gentleness.

Rosemary hesitated a moment.

'I could catch the *Mauretania*... to-morrow evening... at Cherbourg. Oh, I promise I shall just go and come back... and, of course, I shall telegraph. Where to?'

'My sister will not telegraph.'

'Jāli! I swear it.'

'Very well. To Mentone, Poste Restante. But my sister will never come back. I know.'

'Goodbye for a time, Jāli. I shall come back to you, and for good. Or you will come to my country. You will see, it is the land of youth, and hospitality. I shall be able to show you what is best and greatest there. It is a country truly worthy of you: you find there everything you can wish for.'

'It takes away from me all that I want.'

Rosemary placed her red lips on the violet lips of her friend.

Jāli was left alone. He was no longer the Crown Prince, nor a Buddha, nor an ascetic: but a weak and conquered man.

BOOK THREE: IV

> ‘We are piqued with pure descent, but nature loves inoculations.’ *Emerson.*

JALI found himself once more upon a steamer. This time it was very rough: equinoctial gales. Autumn betrays itself on the waters as on the earth, but by different signs: harbours strewn with gulls’ feathers, like an ink-stand, waves of a greener marble, clouds no longer piled up lightly but torn into strips, and a watery moon. The sea fires volleys of white bullets at the sides of the ship: the crockery is smashed, the cutlery thrown about, the furniture split, the luggage hurled to the floor and the passengers hold on where they can—everything makes but a feeble resistance to the engulfing deep.

Rosemary had been gone more than a month since the evening she had left Jāli at Versailles, promising to return but never coming back: she did indeed embark with the intention of explaining her position frankly to her family, but the position was hardly explicable, especially to Julius O. Kent, the formidable orator of the municipality of

Vincennes, Grand Dragon of the Klan, enemy of Black and Yellow men. During his stay in the South, Jāli several times came down from the mountain where he had taken shelter in the very caves in which quaternary man had hidden himself: at the Mentone post office he had found a telegram, postponing her return, letters explaining her delay, and then finally giving up the idea of returning to Europe. No further reference to her friend's coming to the United States.

'Where iron chains would fail, the hair of a woman will hold him back,' said the Buddha's father, anxious to try every means to keep his son at his side. Sakyamouni was not overcome. But Jāli?

Jāli waited. Then he understood that she would not come back: after that he tried to think only of his duty. He would not renounce perfection for a woman's sake. He prayed, he fasted and grew very thin. But the moment came when he could not help giving way: love held him. In the struggle between him and the West, the West defended itself as best it could, though somewhat basely, by means of women. The violent, capricious and imaginative side of the Prince's character, too long subdued, took the ascendant. In returning to Paris at full speed by train, in borrowing some money from his Minister for his journey, Jāli no longer knew whether he was displaying weakness or persistence: for is weakness anything other than persisting in what is forbidden? At present, since he could do nothing to save himself, he was content to repeat that there were no means of saving the world. In reality, he had given up thinking about it. He did not even know that his adventure was coming to an end, from the very fact that he now set no limits to its duration. Blinded, he returned unsuspecting to the dark formlessness of the Oriental soul. Moreover he was lost in the jungle of instinct. Kill desire? Did not the Brahmins themselves teach that desire was the first manifestation of the Spirit? The world arose from a desire! He was in love: his yellow blood, so unconquerable, that in mixed unions it always devours white blood, rushed upon her who had appeared to him as springing from the race of Vedic Gods. Jāli could not live without Rosemary, without her white teeth, so small that they looked as if they had been filed. He could only remember that summer day by the Seine in Normandy, on the chalk cliffs where he had met her, and her look that had entered his flesh like a harpoon. The rest was a negation, an abyss. What mattered that he was contradicting himself? An Asiatic laughs at contradiction. On the great rolling Transatlantic liner, with its foaming bows, and plume of red sparks, under the falling darkness, pitching in the oily hollows of the waves, was Jāli still the enthusiastic young Prince, laden with mystic offerings, who, nearly a year ago, was tossing on the Indian Ocean, on board the *Felix Faure*? Where was the Southern Cross: and where was Buddha? He had disappeared from the sky just as he appeared, discreet, silent divinity who never intrudes where he is not wanted.

Jāli is nothing more than a man who is going across the sea to find a lady.

New York. The Battery. The statue of Liberty crowned with thorns.

'Do not anchor here.'

Then the river mouth, sordid with wreckage and refuse, seamed with white ferry-boats, trawlers, and paddle steamers: gusts of wind that stir the water and whirl the smoke about: waves that beat against the quays and flood into the docks like an insurgent mob into a palace.

The steamer moves slowly upstream, avoiding the buoys laden with yellow gulls, passing in review all the Ocean Lines of the universe, boats so different in size that some could be hoisted on the decks of others, each lying snug in its stable; on the quays tall station buildings, composing a kind of vast indentation whose reflection bites into the water, silvered by the whether he was displaying weakness or persistence: for is weakness anything other than persisting in what is forbidden? At present, since he could do nothing to save himself, he was content to repeat that there were no means of saving the world. In reality, he had given up thinking about it. He did not even know that his adventure was coming to an end, from the very fact that he now set no limits to its duration. Blinded, he returned unsuspecting to the dark formlessness of the Oriental soul. Moreover he was lost in the jungle of instinct. Kill desire? Did not the Brahmins themselves teach that desire was the first manifestation of the Spirit? The world arose from a desire! He was in love: his yellow blood, so unconquerable, that in mixed unions it always devours white blood, rushed upon her who had appeared to him as springing from the race of Vedic Gods. Jāli could not live without Rosemary, without her white teeth, so small that they looked as if they had been filed. He could only remember that summer day by the Seine in Normandy, on the chalk cliffs where he had met her, and her look that had entered his flesh like a harpoon. The rest was a negation, an abyss. What mattered that he was contradicting himself? An Asiatic laughs at contradiction. On the great rolling Transatlantic liner, with its foaming bows, and plume of red sparks, under the falling darkness, pitching in the oily hollows of the waves, was Jāli still the enthusiastic young Prince, laden with mystic offerings, who, nearly a year ago, was tossing on the Indian Ocean, on board the *Felix Faure*? Where was the Southern Cross: and where was Buddha? He had disappeared from the sky just as he appeared, discreet, silent divinity who never intrudes where he is not wanted.

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The steamer moves slowly upstream, avoiding the buoys laden with yellow gulls, passing in review all the Ocean Lines of the universe, boats so different in size that some could be hoisted on the decks of others, each lying snug in its stable; on the quays tall station buildings, composing a kind of vast indentation whose reflection bites into the water, silvered by the pale light of dawn. On the right, the sky scrapers, the older, cubic in form, the newer, tubular and terraced—topped by plumes of smoke, and rising up, like the pipes of organs, in long, prismatic flutings with shadows in their recesses. Then came the warehouses, the platforms in reinforced concrete belonging to the Navigation Companies, built out high over the water, flashing with a thousand colours and black with men twisting like worms at the sight of the arrivals from over sea.

For Jāli this was not a new world. All this was no surprise for him as for a European: the great surprise was Marseilles. For him, as for his brothers of the East, the United States are only an exaggeration of the West. America presents the same problems pushed to the point of absurdity. Jāli turned his back: this morning he felt a poor, frail youth, who was not certain that he might not be hustled back on to Ellis Island owing to a rather dubious passport; waiting for the moment of his meeting with the woman without whom he could not live. Jāli cared little whether Mechanism, Plutocracy, or Imperialism were to triumph: there, on that quay lit by green and yellow arc-lamps, in that vast surging black waiting crowd, where was Rosemary?

Rosemary was not there: she had not come to meet Jāli in spite of his wireless. The boat seemed to heel over at the rush of the passengers, as it came into port. Nearly all of them recognised a familiar face upon the quay: the river that separated these loving hearts narrows to a stream, then to a rivulet and then to an inch or two of splashing water that keeps, for one instant more, the steamer from the quay. Jāli was inspected by the police, interrogated by the Immigration officers, tested by the Health Department, searched by the Douane, surrounded by the vast unpacking of dresses, jewels, hats, and materials carried off from the pillage of Europe. He got on to dry land once more. He was plunged into the torrent of purchasers pouring out of the great shops: suddenly brought up at street corners at the orders of imperious and invisible electric bells, swept from the pavement into the blood-bath of the traffic, sucked in by lifts shooting upwards like geysers: as he moved among these narrow houses their perspective seemed to vanish into the sky rather than into the distance, these honeycombs with their myriad cells, so tall that he could not see the top, veritable square volcanoes with their palls of smoke. Here, he was, as in London, the lost child of those few first evenings; but, in less than a year, how much more vulnerable, more nervous, and less active! His need of seeing Rosemary satisfied him: he asked no more of life. He knew that she lived in a villa on Long Island, —a very long way off: but above all, Jāli did not dare to go there. America made him very frightened. When he was not received by the old lady at the Chateau d'Écouen, he smiled. Here, among these streets that opened and shut like river-locks, he would sooner drown than impinge upon one of these square verbose gentlemen, whose kindness stuns you like a club, who speak without being spoken to, and all want to know where you come from and where you are going. On the boat he had already suffered from having been cross-examined point-blank, questioned as to his country and his identity, whereas Oriental etiquette does not permit of anyone's name being asked, except through third parties.

Jāli drove to a hotel near the Park, a flesh-pink oblong, all flowers, toyshops and marble. A gentleman in a frock coat, wringing his hands in despair, told him that there were no more rooms. His taxi took him to a second hotel in Manhattan, then to another near Eighth Avenue, on Lower Broadway: all were full. The taxi driver laughed in his face.

'Very well, go where you like.'

The nigger took him down to the Lower Town: a brick edifice where rooms were let by the day, with an exterior emergency staircase, mattresses, and Bibles in every room. Washing in the back-yard: a delightful and good-natured half-caste landlady: what a relief to see a black face. . . . All manner of strange folk, living en pension, who seemed to have taken refuge there during a shower or a street fight. Jāli felt better: he got out of the cab and carried his luggage to his room himself.

For lunch, he found himself in a sort of refectory, adorned with a bar, where men were eating as they stood, wearing their hats, and in brightly coloured suits. All the dishes were put on his plate at once, like a dog's meal.

After much hesitation, Jāli suddenly left the table d'hote, went into the telephone box, and put ten cents in the slot: he asked for Julius O. Kent's number at Long Island. It was the luncheon hour: Rosemary might well be at home. He did it calmly, as he might have laid a bomb: and then he drew back to judge of the effect.

'You, Jāli, where are you?'

'In New York, in a hotel.'

'God! You in New York!'

There was surprise in her voice and the shadow of a recoil.

'Shall I wait for you, Rosemary. Where can I see you? Have you had lunch?'

'No . . . that is, yes. Besides I'm not free at the moment. We have people here.'

'Can I come to your house?'

'No: that's quite impossible.'

'Are you still she whom I called my sister?'

'Yes, yes.'

On an American telephone there is no place for banalities, and even less for the exchange of profundities. He could hardly expect to rediscover, thus gropingly, and in the dark, the state of an emotion which time, distance, and contrary winds had very likely driven out of its course. Jāli guessed her confusion: and he felt that she was in a hurry to leave the telephone.

'Where can you meet me?'

'Look here,' she said, 'be at the entrance to Coney Island to-morrow at mid-day.'

Jali went up-town with a determined air, as if he was going somewhere, as if, indeed, he had something else before him than a rendezvous in twenty-four hours. Why else had he come to America unless Rosemary had summoned him? He could not even remember having made up his mind to leave Europe: those last few weeks he had acted as though walking in his sleep. It had not been his own life over there: his double had left him and preceded him here. He was pursuing, as in a dream, himself as much as her.

This faculty of self-comprehension that he had gradually acquired, which distinguished him from and raised him above, other Orientals, he seemed to have lost. All objectivity had disappeared. He did not know under what aspect to consider Rosemary. At times she appeared to him in the guise of a Shakespearian heroine, ideal, pure, and insignificant: at others, as a formidable creature, with a very powerful personality. She was, perhaps, both, according as she controlled herself or let herself go. But he was prepared to go to any lengths, to endure everything to keep her. For the only image that never left him when he thought of her, was her white skin.

Coney Island and its scaffoldings, a forest of poles: circuses: popular games, railways zig-zagging among cardboard rocks, the dead lake of the water-chute, bumping tubs, artificial draughts to blow up women's skirts, netting, bars, sinister shooting-galleries in the depth of gaping alleys, contorting mirrors, merry-go-rounds—all inexpressibly dreary under the crude light of solitude and morning, are these the chosen amusements of the greatest of the white races? Why had she arranged to meet him in this abandoned place? Jāli waited among the open-air ice cream vendors, the silhouette-artists, the Italian *frittimisti*, the photographers with their back cloths all ready—painted motor-cars, aeroplanes, and palm trees—in which oval holes are provided for the faces. At this moment, in his middle-class clothes, he felt as if he were himself a grotesque participator in the fair: he lost all consciousness, and felt as though he were dissolving. It almost seemed as if, while still alive, he had been re-incarnated in a being inferior to what he had been the day before.

No longer barefooted, nor clothed in linen, but wrapped in furs and shod with little high-heeled patent shoes, Rosemary came to him; and a dress so youthful and so short that when she crossed her legs, she showed her garters and a glimpse of bare flesh.

'Jāli, your hair has grown again. I like you better with it long.'

More beautiful than anything he had expected, because she was so far away, enveloped in her people and armed with the prejudices of her country. No longer were they both abroad, on neutral ground. Rosemary was at home. Her very feet showed that they walked upon another earth than his. There were laws whose business it was to protect her; a rigid social code, a family, a society always on the defensive, where woman is all-powerful, intervened between them. Even her face had changed: it had become genuinely American, square as her shoes, with a blunt, unfeeling nose, a strong chin, and secretive lips.

‘ My sister,’ said Jāli, none the less.

He understood from another, hardly perceptible, sign of recoil, that she was no longer accustomed to be addressed in this way. One never finds a woman exactly where one had left her. As she stood before him, so tall and so fair, he suddenly saw himself as a little, yellow, narrow-shouldered youth, badly dressed, and extinguished under a bowler hat which came down to his somewhat prominent ears ; poor little barbarian. But he rather enjoyed his humiliation.

‘ The world is as empty, Rosemary, when Your Light does not shine, as when Gautama, having folded his mantle into four, lay down upon it to die.’

She smiled and unbent.

‘ The moment I meet you again, Jāli, you fill me with confidence. I feel your lines of force touch me.’

‘ Since I no longer see you I have lost that force, even more than when you were there. I am a fallible guide, Rosemary, whose power is limited.’

‘ But why have you come to New York ? ’

He wanted to say :

‘ Where you are is my country ’ ; but he was seized once more by that inability, characteristic of Orientals, to express themselves, which is so painful that it sometimes drives them to suicide.

She went on :

'Did you think I loved you less ? You know very well, Jāli, that from the day I understood your renunciation, the contempt in which you held everything that was not part of your salvation, I wanted nothing except to know you, I had no other desire than to admire you.'

'I only know that on that day my renunciation ceased. . . . Rosemary, I no longer live, as I used to do, for purity alone.'

She raised her eyes to this and overcame her modesty.

'Do you feel that ? I felt it too,' she answered.

'You don't want me ?'

'No, Jāli, it is not your fault : it is mine. I should not have been so free with you, an Oriental . . . but you were like no one else. You were an image of holiness, a beautiful statue. . . .'

'Won't you take me as I am ?'

'That is not the man I loved the most.'

When they came near and touched, they were two warm young bodies that understood each other, but as soon as their eyes met, they fell apart, for the eyes do not contain the same essence as the body. They are two races, two opposing planets, one bright, full of wonder and hope, the other sombre, full of years and despair. Rosemary shed some silent tears. She was divided : one part of her was happy with Jāli :

the other part was restless and longing to be free.

'Where can I see you again, Rosemary?'

He could not come to her home. 'Can anything be more tiresome than an American at home?' she said, trying to laugh it off: nor could she of course, visit him since he was at a hotel. Jāli suggested they should lunch together somewhere on the following day.

'The fact is . . . I don't know how to get away,' she said: 'besides these public places are so dreadful for a heart to heart talk. I must find some excuse.'

'Excuse? I thought you were free, free as America.'

'That is because you don't know America, Jāli.'

'Anyhow I remember very well what your Y.M.C.A. used to say at Karastra; that everything in the world that was in bondage would be released by your country!'

'Jāli, since you are the man who knows everything and can read in people's hearts, don't make me say any more. . . .'

'It is for your sake, that I know and can do, no more, Rosemary. It is finished: Mâra, the demon has conquered me: I am punished. I am alone, poor, without country, and without love.'

In Paris, when Jāli spoke like that, Rosemary was overcome with ardour: all her independence gave way, and he regained all his ascendancy over her.

'You're so magnetic,' she used to say, surrendering to his charm. But every trace of the effort that she had made in Europe to break through her prejudices had disappeared. Henceforward American conventionality resumed control. To-day, it no longer thrilled her to be alone against the world: it frightened her. Since yesterday, since Jāli had suddenly appeared in New York, Rosemary had admitted to herself that she was nervous of appearing in public with a man of colour. It was a terror that came from the very depths of her race. Supposing Jāli, with his oval eyes, his bronze complexion and his flat nose, were taken for a Chinaman. In the United States a Chinaman is almost a negro. She knew that a young American girl is not allowed to keep such exotic company. Then she blushed: she was ashamed of her shame, realising how unworthy it was of her. Her courage demanded immediate satisfaction.

'I shall expect you to-morrow,' she said, with perfect self-possession. 'You must take me out to lunch.'

What was indicated at the moment, was something humble like a washing of the feet.

Something that would be becoming to her, and present a striking spectacle to the world. It was from motives of defiance that she went further and, instead of choosing some modest resort where they would have passed unnoticed, said:

'Shall we meet at one o'clock at . . . say . . . Sherry's?'

They met: but it turned out as Rosemary had expected. She arrived before one o'clock. In the hall of the fashionable restaurant she asked for the maître d'hôtel. 'A gentleman from Asia was to be her host . . . he had just landed in New York. They would like a quiet corner—over there at the far end for instance. It was desirable that when the young man arrived he should not excite attention. . . .' Swathed in their panther skins, slim and sinuous, with hearts of wild beasts, the *merveilleuses* of Park Avenue arrived. Luncheons from which men were so markedly absent that one might have thought oneself at the ancient mysteries. Conspiracies. Alliances. A truce in the duel of sex while the husbands sweated in the Lower Town.

A few minutes after the hour, Jāli appeared, thin and graceful with his soft dark eyes. Rosemary no longer noticed the charm of his face, but the darkness of his colour. The white of his eyes was dreadfully like hard enamel, and how noticeable was the glitter of his teeth . . . she herself felt so fair, so different from him, that such a contrast was intolerable as soon as realised.

They sat down at table and began to talk, he with diffidence, and she with too much assurance. Their questions and answers fell automatically from their dry lips. Rosemary's ears grew hot. She felt the approach of the dreadful thing against which they were to be hurled: it grew nearer, larger, and the speed terrific. She lost control of her heart and nerves, and her muscles moved automatically. She heard the far-off voice of Jāli, as if it were coming from a different room, but she no longer understood what he was saying. It is the apathy that stuns at the very instant of the catastrophe . . . she could tell the moment when it was to begin . . . there. . . .

'I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Mademoiselle . . .' whispered a waitress, painted and supercilious, speaking in low tones . . . 'but the ladies at the table opposite wish to point out that this is not the place for a Chinaman, an Asiatic. . . . On this occasion, we will say no more, Mademoiselle, but it would be as well . . . you understand, old customers. . . .'

Rosemary, very red, got up to speak to them and tell them who Jāli was and whom they had insulted.

'No, don't move,' said Jāli: 'it is better so . . . you must not guarantee me, I am insolvent. I am a man of colour. It is exactly as it should be. I like this sacrifice.'

He raised his head and gazed calmly at his neighbours. His disorder only betrayed itself in his trembling hands, and his complexion, which had become ashen. He spoke with contempt, like a nobleman facing a mob.

The whole incident took place with a kind of silent suddenness, a polite brutality. Nothing in the nature of a brawl in a bar: no plates were thrown, no bottles were used as clubs, as in the films: but one felt all the more the implacable shock of the two races, the bodily jealousy, the savagery of the sons and daughters of those who made this new country, against that yellow race. As the luncheon drew to an end, Jāli said quietly:

'I shall leave New York.'

The courses arrived altogether, with dizzy speed. Everybody was anxious for it to be at an end. It was a meal of high tension. Thanks to the noise, the tziganes, the buzz of conversation, the silences, like gaping trenches, were filled up.

'Where will you go?'

'As near as possible to Asia. California, I should think. I cannot stand your winters.'

'Jāli, it is torture to face each other across this table. I can't bear it any longer. Let us go.'

Outside, Jāli said nothing. As he felt too deeply to speak, Rosemary went on:

'I know very well that men are equal and are brothers: it is only marks of excellence that distinguish them. . . .' Jāli shook his head and pursued his thoughts. A coloured race! He understood now why he could not find a room in all the great hotels.

'Jāli, this is awful. I feel you hate me, and hate my country. You are angry. . . .'

'Angry?' (it was impossible to offer him a deadlier insult): 'with what part of you should I be angry, O Miracle of Sweetness? With your hair? With your golden head? Are you not made up of all these things? I need only to think of this assemblage of which each item is guiltless, to be forthwith purged of all affection, and placed beyond the reach of anger. It was the Master's method, and it was not a bad one. It permits me to bid you farewell, while thanking you for having crossed my path.'

'Jāli!'

He cut her short, and bowed, saying:

'I am unworthy, I am most unworthy.'

He accompanied these words with an Eastern smile, into which there enters indifference, politeness, cruelty or pain, but gladness—never.

BOOK

IV

THE NINE-FOLD PARASOL

BOOK FOUR : I

THE sunset brings the flags down from the top of the forts, and the pennons from the mast-heads. With their Kodaks slung over their shoulders, the last tourists have ceased their fusilade of the landscape, and are gone. Now, except for a heavy perfume of roses, night alone enfolds the mountain, like the grasp of a hand. Jāli was lying on the edge of the forest, among the ashen-coloured heather, by a fire of eucalyptus wood. It is the hour when he began to live, to unfold, like the moon flowers at Karastra: the hour when America has got rid of her hundred and twenty million inhabitants, her twenty-two million motor-cars, and suddenly becomes once more the vast and virgin solitude, that she was yesterday: he would have liked to have unbaptised the cities and given them back their Indian names, so near to nature. For a few days, Jāli had been near San Francisco waiting to return to Asia. He had no more money, but he

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He suffered so frightfully that his feelings for Rosemary began to seem of slight importance. It often happens that we take an anecdote for an event simply because it occurred at a moment which chance or some other circumstance made decisive. Except for a brief instant in which he nearly yielded to the impulse of his blood, Jāli had now begun to think that he had never loved her. True desire leaves other traces; it is devastating, but humble. What is this contemptuous pain, this dark discharge of purulent hatred? Rosemary, a little intellectual with tortoiseshell spectacles, intoxicated by Freud and Havelock Ellis . . . when all is said, a trader's daughter, one of those white traders whom the older Asia, not a hundred years ago, took care to isolate in the Treaty Ports, as if they had the plague. Certain great and learned men had been the leaders of that Asia, and Jāli now wished their teachings could be brought back again, since that harmonious alliance of the East and West that he had tried to realise in the cult of the Perfect One, and subsequently by the warm fusion of two hearts, the precipitation of two races . . . had failed. Thus Jāli consoled himself by troubled visions of an impossible apocalypse, of which the Western world was the chief and daily victim. This Twilight of the pale Gods, with a background of ruinous collapsing Banks, an imaginary spectacle with which he indulged himself, was what relieved his mind the most. Since New York he had made such frequent use of it that it had become as necessary to him as a drug, like one of those manias by means of which neurasthenics are able to get sleep.

In front of him, the darkness was everywhere pierced with lights, some fixed and others moving. First came Oakland, below him, with its hundred thousand bungalows. Then, as his eyes travelled further, the bay itself, motionless as a vat of mercury. Ferry boats, with glazed sides and roof, cut through the water in parallel lines, carrying their passengers back to San Francisco, towards the vertical stars of the skyscrapers, and the kindly wink of the luminous advertisements of Market St. Enfin; behind the line of the Twin Peaks, could be seen a little bar of moonlit metal; then Jāli felt his heart unfold; before him was the Pacific Ocean. There was nothing else between him and Asia: it was against Asia that those long-distance naval guns were aimed, mounted behind the forts of the Presidio and the Porte d'Or. Still on the same soil as Rosemary, though far away, as in a dream, he bestrode at once the past and the future. Now that he had reached the shore of the Great Ocean, he could only stay here for a moment, to take breath; no longer than he could help. As soon as he was able he would fly for refuge to the warm shadowless body of Asia (for Asia casts her shadow upon Europe, but allows none to fall upon herself).

Jāli still remembered the words which the waitress at Sherry's had used to describe him: 'a gentleman from Asia.' It was truer than she had thought. Since these whites had not the sense to understand, let them try the new Asia. Then they would be able to say, with every truth, a 'cad' from Asia. Yet once more, the world would not read the facts, until torrents of blood had been poured out. Racial conflicts would be the real 'crimes passionels' of the twentieth century. Jāli was aching to leave this American soil, to cleanse himself from all taint by crossing the sea, and to reach Japan, where he proposed to live in a monastery. It was no longer example that drove him forward, not even faith; it was merely the impossibility of going elsewhere. The patriarchal and religious era was at an end everywhere in Asia; only Japan offered a refuge to the sons of kings. Perhaps those islands would be the refuge of the last aristocracies, when the continents were being overwhelmed by the mob. Jāli could not help remembering that Japan had been the first to bring a European nation to her knees, without renouncing her ancestral virtues, and, indeed, even with their help. A sort of filial piety drew him towards this offspring of the sea, this ancient ancestor of Polynesia.

He got up, and walked along the coast road that is called the 'Sky Line Tour.' The black poles of the pines marched down the lower slopes of the hills, until they marched into the sea, and became masts. On the banks of the torrents could still be seen the holes made by the gold-diggers seventy years ago, when they greedily scraped up the earth with their nails, as if the true wealth of the place were not the sun, the sea, and the air already fresh with the salt breeze, perfumed with resin and saturated with seaweed. Lingering patches of snow lay stretched out here and there like washing. At this hour, already night, on the other side of the bay, the Chinese City was awakening, the shops and restaurants of Chinatown had just opened. Jāli walked on, musing, lower and lower down the slope until the cries of children broke in upon his thoughts : sea gulls : he had reached the edge of the bay.

BOOK FOUR : II

JALI crossed the water on one of the large, glass-windowed ferry boats, lit up like three-storied hot houses, the very same that he admired every evening from the summit of his mountain. A quarter of an hour later, he landed at San Francisco. He walked up those sloping streets, laborious stair-ways without steps, so steep that those who climb them nearly fall backwards before they reach the top. Halfway up, a long street girdled the hill, all lit up with Chinese lanterns, and splashed here and there by arc-lamps of Asiatic hotels. Some dubious Americanised youths were hanging about the street corners: he recognised them as Cantonese by their short stature, their gingerbread complexions, and their large, flat heads. As he walked on he met fewer and fewer whites. A few Italian vegetable sellers: then some furtive Japanese half-castes, travellers in cocaine. Soon, none but Chinamen. A horrible smell of open drains completed the Oriental décor. Décor? No, a part of Asia herself, clinging to the side of America. Every shop, was China—restaurants, silk merchants, vendors of salted nuts, druggists, where powdered antelope-hoof could be bought by all comers as a specific against the rheumatism. Jāli came across vagabonds of all manner of races, unemployed, who, with buttoned-up collars and hats pulled down over their eyes, looked like ghosts in Chinese fairy tales. He went into a theatre, observing on the vertical playbill that 'Princess Spider' was being given. He bought a seat for a few cents. Rows of faces of various tints of bronze: not one American. All were reading Chinese newspapers, the evening edition, and discussing their affairs, while the actors, from the elevation of the stage, discharged a din of cymbals on their heads. The eunuch's shrill notes pierced his ear. Jāli stayed there silent, among these yellow neighbours, who paid no attention to him. He had been feeling better for some time. The cries of the actors, their dazzling tiaras of gilded paper, their barbarous and traditional antics, reminded him of the bands of nomads who used to visit Karastra, and play at the Palace, when there was a funeral. Jāli indulged in a delightful impression that he had got home.... If he had been forbidden access to the American city, and condemned to live here, he would have been more than glad. His resentment gradually found relief. All the people round him seemed happy: they had no feelings of exile, these people who were certain that their bones would return to China. In the meantime, here, they escaped famine and pillage: they did not risk those sunstrokes of the great yellow democracy which white professors have invented to amuse them: in this comfortable shelter they enlarged their banking accounts, and the parody of politics at home served at any rate to make them rich.

When the performance was over, Jāli decided not to go back. Indeed, where should he go? A long red lacquer notice met his eye: *Chop-suey*, and he went into the restaurant: in a private room, of carved iron-wood with wicker-work doors, he was served with rice and tea on a high marble table. He fell to thinking how he would get the money for his journey. He was too proud to telegraph to Karastra: and he also decided that he would not act indirectly, through the agency of his Legations. Then he made up his mind to look for work, in the quarter, perhaps at the docks, and save up what was needed for his passage. The clock struck one in the morning. The indefatigable Chinese were still at work, carrying loads, shaving, ironing, hammering coffins, depilating their nostrils. The gaming houses were as active as large stores. Drunken Americans were getting out of taxis: Chinatown, for them, meant a place of doubtful entertainments. To Jāli's eyes they were sunk in drunkenness as in a trough: they hurled insults at him, but he did not answer.

At that moment he stopped to get his watch mended at the shop of an old watchmaker, whose name was Ah-Kien. The man was working alone, under the reflection of a lamp: he owned only a quarter of a shop, which he had rented from a vendor of early vegetables. There was just room for himself and his tools. Scented herbs were burning before a bronze Kwanon. Jāli entered the little compartment: he wanted to talk, not to sleep.

'Where do you come from, Ah-Kien?'

'From Amoy. My mother was from Formosa, but she was Chinese.'

'Have you been here long?'

'Thirty years.'

Jāli watched the man bent over his board—the earthy, age-long face, wearing a green waxed linen eye-shade, and enormous American spectacles, like an engine-driver.

'Aren't you unhappy here?'

The watchmaker raised his eyes, and ancient Eastern eyes, the colour of stagnant water, and answered:

'Only the young are unhappy.'

'Still, America is not a country for the old.'

The Chinaman was silent for a moment, then he added:

'I know nothing of America.'

'But what about this 'Grant Avenue,' this earth on which you live, your stool—all this is America.'

Jāli could see through the cranium of his interlocutor that these words produced no effect.

'This is a quiet street . . . I have not left it since I crossed the sea . . . there are never any soldiers or floods . . . nobody brands you on the chest to make you say where your money is. People here always pay the price you ask. . . . Have you come to me because your watch will not strike?'

Jāli did not like to say that he had come rather to get himself repaired. This singular companion, who accepted his lot with equanimity, with none of the turbulence of the lower quarters of great cities, did him good. Like the Perfect One, he knew neither desire nor hatred: he worked at his mechanisms as the other worked at his salvation: translucid crystallisation of the experience of many thousand years. He seemed to possess the very colour of China, a splinter of its rock, a pinch of that vast brown plain. He was pure as those are who labour with their hands.

When he went back to the forest, Jāli heard from his point of vantage the confused noise of rolling pebbles made by cities as they wake, and now and then the drawn-out shriek of the siren of a factory, or the throaty roar of a motor horn. He felt better. He began to think that he could now climb to one of those twentieth stories, on to the roof of the Fairmont Hotel, that illuminated cake, without giving way to the desire to jump off. That elasticity, that plasticity, which enables Oriental minds to adapt themselves to the most astonishing changes of direction, stood him in good stead. It is either an unconscious inner organisation, or an amazing faculty for forgetfulness, which those who do not know Asia too often take for insensibility. The hour that he had spent with that imperturbable artisan, in his armour of serenity, manipulating his tools with those astonishing long dry fingers, had calmed Jāli. In his turn, he prayed to the goddess of Pity: he too knew how to live on nothing but a herring or an idea. He recalled the man's face, drawn like that of a boatman on the towpath, dragging his life, like a heavy junk, against the stream, and yet always good-humoured, withered and wise, pocketing cents to turn them into the infinitesimal currency of his country, this mummified Chinaman, among his clock-springs and his recoils, was waiting for the hour when his son should slip under his tongue the piece of silver to appease the genii of the Shades.

Jāli went to see him several times: and became his paid employé. He learnt to polish watch glasses, and work the grindstone. His grief was passing into a more general and elementary struggle, not dissimilar to that which had originally driven him from Karastra. His despair became less obvious, without however diminishing, far from that—for if pain needs tears, sadness has dry eyes. His leaning towards sadness remained with him, though he no longer saw in it, as he used to do, a desirable short cut to the knowledge of Being. It was a deliberate abandonment, a kind of metaphysical and often almost sensual melancholy, a non-resistance which, in the sphere of experience, recalled that which Ghandi had preached in the sphere of politics: a sort of refusal to take any part in life, as if his heart had gone on strike. More and more indifferent to the interests of the human race, Jāli watched the dissolution of his thought and allowed himself to become entranced by an increasing inability to act: he began to wish to lose form and substance. Once more, as in the first evenings in London, and his first mornings in Paris, he felt exhausted. Those cities are indeed, as has often been said, the tombs of nations. The very idea of the reorganisation of the world now seemed to him untenable. He thought of suicide. This desire for self-destruction, coming after the desire to find himself, was surely but the rhythm of life, the very movement of the revolving earth.

He could never stay in America, whatever happened. Enough of these houses, tearing up to the sky like a scream, these motor cars, all alike, blue-black, gleaming, like meat flies. To this childish faith in science and progress, and, as a reward, this stifling prosperity, Jāli still preferred Europe with its scepticism, its irreligion, its wickedness that comes from misery. Besides, the decline of America was only a question of time—the country was already over-driven and neurasthenic—for everything contains its contrary and every germ of life gives forth death. Ideas are only apparently in opposition. In reality they circulate like the water in a chassis. In the presence of this interplay, at once hateful and consoling, Jāli concluded that the only thing was to be as upright and as simple as possible. He began to understand how full of pride had been his past behaviour. He grieved to think that he might have been judged by it, and still thought capable of it, at that very moment when he plumbed the very depths of solitude, humiliation and despair.

The divinest teaching, the most smiling encouragement to the highest merit, came to Jāli during the hours that he now passed each evening with the clock maker in Grant Avenue. The nights, once so sorrowful, now went by leaving Jāli unhurt: the hours fled almost beneficently until morning. He finished his work, arranged his tools, and climbed up the hill in the dawn. Little by little Jāli learnt from Ah Kien the humble mystery of Chinese wisdom, the realistic art of compromise, the last of all the virtues. Nothing would serve but what was reasonable. To mount the throne, after his father, and reign, according to the rites, without ever travelling abroad, without any changes, in the motionless, silent, dark order of the lunar calendar, within the framework of his destiny, perhaps that was the supreme penitence, true obedience? To make a choice within the universal order, or even disorder—there perhaps was the greatness of the West, but to yield, and to consent to one's lot, was certainly the greatness of the East. He had given up all idea of imitating ascetics, as children try to ape athletes. Surely he who remains a man of good will, who finds his vocation in the world of every day, instead of making some extravagant search for his soul in the desert, approaches more nearly to the Perfect One, interprets the Master's thought more exactly, in taking from the Buddha what is still living?

That morning the twin peaks, like twin-yolks of shadow, still plunged in the last violet hues of darkness, sharp to the senses like sorrel, had just caught upon their highest point the rays of the rising sun which, one by one, were bursting from the earth. Jāli breathed, inhaling slowly, deeply, according to the art of the Yoghis, trying to dominate by his thought Oakland, Berkeley, and Alameda, the three cities of the Bay, which were awakening at his feet, still tottering from the lethargy of sleep and the prospect of the toils of another day. He resisted no longer. He felt the establishment of neighbourly relations between his past and his future; he dismissed the bitterness that had served him so often: something more than a truce, a profound agreement had found a place within him, suspended as he now was between earth and heaven. He suddenly yielded to the desire to bend his knees and worship.

At that very hour the last special editions of the *San Francisco Examiner* announced, in pink headlines, the death of King Indra of Karastra.

BOOK FOUR : III

THE river is six hundred yards across, but to-day there is only a narrow channel free for navigation. Among the floating timber which covers it as with a moving floor—a prostrate yet travelling forest—pass streams of junks, floating kitchens, outrigged canoes, and boats propelled from the stern by women bent over their flexible oars. As it is fête day at Karastra, long racing boats with aeroplane engines, belonging to Chinese millionaires, have come to plunge into this confusion, at the risk of scratching their elegant and expensive sides. Flags everywhere: the freighters of the *Est Asiatique Danois*, the colliers of *Jardine, Mathieson*, the steamers of the *Affrêteurs Indo-Chinois*, the war vessels of Karastra and the royal yacht herself. So many flames make a positive international furnace. The large steamers, though anchored off the city, dwarf the landscape, dominate the banks and the flagstaffs of the Legations, where might be also seen all the colours of the world. The police boat passes, in a vast spume of water, among the curses of the crowd and the shrill din of the sirens, forcing the spectators back into line. And if their megaphoned orders are not instantly obeyed, the officers lean out and, with a black foot, push the boat back into its place.

The confusion and clamour die away into silence as soon as the great Buddhist temples are observed rising tier by tier against the brilliant evening sky. Opposite their imposing walls all traffic ceases, and the river can be seen entirely cleared for the ceremony: the channel continues to widen, like an avenue made ready for a review or the arrival of a sovereign. The native populations, with limbs as short as fins, built for the oar and for swimming, muddy of skin—among the more polished and clearer amber of Chinese torsos—throng the banks, their faces all striped with white lime: their smooth heads glistening with cocoanut oil, like the shells of beetles. They throw various drugs into the water so as to stupify and catch the fish. They have been waiting for hours, without the slightest impatience, to watch the new King pass to his coronation in the Great Pagoda. The scene continues until the sun has disappeared.

Then, from far off, appears, first a faint, then a more distinct, line of gold. The procession is at hand. The great canoes advance slowly, hardly ruffling the thick, liqueur-like surface of the water. First come twelve escorting barges, in single file, each propelled by fifty rowers in red, who sing the 'Hymn to Water,' and strike the stream as though it had been some yielding anvil, in measured unison, with their silver paddles among a shower of liquid sparks. After them come long, thin craft, like weapons, carrying presents for the priests. Steersmen, standing up, mark time with ivory wands. As soon as the wash of their passage has died away, the electric enthusiasm of the people gives way to an attentive watchfulness: here is the royal barge, a long, shark-like craft, covered with precious decorations, with horse-hair and bags of magic emblems tied round the bows, and drawn up at the stern into a peak which brings the poop ten feet out of the water. She contains in her central tabernacle, hung with pink silk, him who was once Prince Jāli, now the new King of Karastra, Indra III. The presence of its invisible sovereign is not revealed to the crowd, plunged suddenly into the depths of ecstasy, except by the automatic gesture of the wielder of the fan who stands up at the back. Power that none may approach! Mythical darkness, with no other degree of initiation than what may be conferred by relationship with the Moon. Accompanying the sovereign, the Princes, for the most part in military uniform, the nobles, the eunuchs, the astrologers, proceed downstream in accordance with the ceremonial which has been described by Chinese travellers in the twelfth century. All the flags are hoisted to the tops of their masts. When they reach the Great Pagoda the paddlers utter their ritual cry, in imitation of a wild duck rising from the water.

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The middle of the temple was empty. Along the mouldering walls, reeking with moisture, opposite the altar, stood the Corps Diplomatique and the European officials: on the right, like an oblong and motionless splash of sunlight, were the priests, fifty-eight of them, in three rows, seated according to the ritual, with bent legs, knees open, one bare shoulder emerging from the yellow toga, and shaven head: not deigning to look, they transfixed the ceremony with their far-gazing eyes, that refused to open upon this world. Opposite them, on a throne of gold in the form of a boat, the symbol of a pilot, sat the King. A Buddha presided over the temple, motionless, in the ponderous calm of copper, sleeping a metal sleep. He seemed sure of himself, ready to repeat his favourite phrase:

'The doctrine has been well spoken.' From time to time the new sovereign raised his head: then, under the shadow of the roof, he could see shining like an impassive star, the sacred face of the Perfect One. The flame that rose from the head of the god was so pointed that the roof had had to be raised at that place. His polished body, six yards tall, bent heavily towards those he was instructing, and his sacred feet were buried in a heap of white arum lilies.

The King got up, prostrated himself three times on the silver matting, and handed to the Abbot, who, on his right, was in charge of the line of priests, such presents as the ritual permitted him to offer. Without a word of thanks, in complete terrestrial oblivion, these presents were received and passed from hand to hand. Then the Abbot, in his turn, came forward and raised a vase containing water from the principal national rivers: the ultimate essence of the kingdom, pure distillation of that soil of Asia, filtered through the nine noble elements: earth, ashes, cornflour, rice, lotus, jasmine, powdered iron, gold, coal, not forgetting fire. The King dipped his hand in the vase and scattered water over his hair, making it look even darker and smoother. The priests descended from their dais, and came to sprinkle him from a pearl shell. He was now streaming with water, like a demigod on a fountain. Then followed the harsh, monotonous sound of the prayers spoken in Pali, in which each one of them affirmed that the new sovereign was agreeable to the Master. The jasmine blossoms fell like snowy rain.

King Indra III was like the Buddha. The same tapers of yellow wax lit up the hollow of the chin, the tip of the nose, and the forehead of both of them. Each had the same narrow shoulders, the same curving cheeks, and the same slant of the eye towards the temple. Their naked torsos seem to have been cast in the same metal. Through the windows with their lacquered gold shutters could be seen the sky dark with heat, edged with blacklead, pierced by the first pale stars, tainted by the vultures soaring high up with motionless wings. The first bats entered the temple. When the prayers were over, there was a silence. Then followed five fanfares: and the bugles and drums broke forth in the fields. In the river port, rigid salvoes of artillery brought tall pillars of air shattering to the ground. The temple crocodiles hid themselves in terror in their pools.

So great an excess of merit distinguished this young sovereign, such mighty omens had so favoured him, and the impassible Buddha presented so profound a contrast to the agonies of the Crucified of the West, that the European officials seemed on the point of falling on their knees. King Indra III was seated on his throne, motionless: before him on the ground lay the golden slippers and the seven seals. In one hand he held the sabre, and the sceptre in the other; his neck was bent under the weight of massive necklaces; above his crowned head leaned the nine-storied parasol, the symbol of almighty power.

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